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Allegiance

WetClan

Leader: Fuzzstar- an unusually dappled light brown & white she-cat with green eyes *(16 moons old, confident, great teacher, 9 lives)*

Deputy: Wolfblotch- black/dark brown mottled she-cat with gray eyes *(48 moons old, loyal, great hunter)*

Apprentice, Oatpaw

Medicine Cat: Boragewisp- unusually spotted pale and white she-cat with one cyan eye and one amber eye *(117 moons old, careful, great speaker & great healer)*

Warriors: Ashmoss- unusually dappled dark gray & white she-cat with cyan eyes *(98 moons old, adventurous, renown hunter)*

Riverclaw- gray & white nonbinary cat with hazel eyes *(59 moons old, troublesome, unusually strong fighter, learner of lore)*

Amberbite- long-furred ginger & white nonbinary cat with green-yellow eyes *(48 moons old, rebellious, great kitsitter)*

Apprentice, Clawpaw

Apprentices: Oatpaw- dark ginger tabby tom with hazel eyes *(9 moons old, insecure, interested in Clan history)*

Clawpaw- gray smoke & white she-cat with cobalt eyes, has retraction dystrophy *(6 moons old, strange, lover of stories)*

Kits: Howlkit- black tabby tom with green-yellow eyes *(3 moons old, polite, avid play fighter)*

Honeykit- ginger tabby tom with yellow eyes *(2 moons old, attention-seeker, interested in Clan history)*

[image]

[image]

GullClan

Leader: Petuniastar- white & unusually spotted black she-cat with heather blue eyes *(22 moons, confident, steady paws, helpful insight, 9 lives)*

Apprentice, Rattlepaw

Deputy: Sneezewhisker- light brown tabby tom with silver eyes *(70 moons old, cold, fish-like swimmer)*

Apprentice, Luckpaw

Medicine Cat: Fluffglide- black/ginger tortie and white she-cat with green-yellow eyes *(67 moons old, righteous, dream shaper, good kitsitter)*

Warriors: Pineember- speckled dark ginger and white she-cat with copper eyes *(106 moons old, lonesome, lore master, clever)*

Owlmuzzle- long-furred dark brown/brown mottled and white she-cat with cobalt *(24 moons, bloodthirsty, steady paws, good climber)*

Apprentices: Rattlepaw- dorsal-striped light brown tabby tom with bronze eyes *(9 moons old, ambitious, quick to help)*

Luckpaw- black/light brown mottled she-cat with blue eyes *(6 moons old, wise, avid play fighter, moss-ball hunter)*

Kits: Locustkit- unusually spotted pale and white tom with pale yellow eyes *(4 moons old, charming, quick witted)*

Siltkit- dorsal-striped brown tom with gold eyes *(3 moons old, bossy, avid play fighter)*

[image]

[image]

BubbleClan

Leader: Fiercestar- long-furred pale smoke and white she-cat with one yellow eye & one blue eye *(87 moons old, ambitious, beloved kitsitter, good mediator, 9 lives)*

Deputy: Sporeleap- cream tabby she-cat with green eyes *(88 moons old, sneaky, formidable fighter, good speaker)*

Medicine Cat: Sloestream- long-furred dorsal-stripe black & white tom with cobalt eyes *(23 moons old, confident, good swimmer, ghost sight)*

Warriors: Flowerchomp- long-furred ginger/brown tortie and white she-cat with cyan eyes *(71 moons old, childish, fast as the wind)*

Apprentice, Ridgepaw

Thistlefleck- unusually spotted pale tom with sunlit ice eyes *(47 moons old, troublesome, great speaker, good storyteller)*

Apprentices: Ridgepaw- golden brown and white tom with green-yellow eyes *(6 moons old, wise, quick witted)*

Kits: Murkkit- dorsal-stripe brown and white tom with cyan eyes *(3 moons old, bossy, picky nest builder)*

Cloudkit- pale ticked she-kit with cyan eyes *(1 moon old, daydreamer, moss-ball hunter)*

Fadedkit- dorsal-stripe black she-kit with bronze eyes *(1 moon old, attention-seeker, interested in Clan history)*

[image]

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WheatClan

Leader: Lightstar- light brown smoke and white tom with gold eyes *(110 moons old, vengeful, formidable fighter, great teacher, 9 lives)*

Deputy: Wisptail- unusually dappled dark gray and white she-cat with hazel eyes *(94 moons old, cold, good speaker, valuable insight)*

Medicine Cat: Heavyshriek- golden tabby and white tom with blue eyes *(55 moons old, compassionate, unnatural senses)*

Warriors: Clawcurl- long-furred unusually spotted silver and white she-cat with cobalt eyes *(52 moons old, troublesome, good fighter)*

Budtree- long-furred dark gray smoke she-cat with sunlit ice eyes *(50 moons old, strange, fast as the wind)*

Kits: Houndkit- tortie she-kit with gray eyes *(5 moons old, nervous, restless sleeper)*

Snowkit- pale and white tom with green-yellow eyes *(2 moons old, impulsive, lover of stories)*

[image]

Prologue

The wind brushed across a large meadow where flowers were blooming, and the grass was so soft. It was home to an overpopulated group called the Keepers that would protect this valley from other dangers such as vicious cats and predators. The was sun was shining brightly and the Keepers have been at peace for seasons, with more and more generations being born every moon. At least... that's how it was like until the Twolegs started coming.

A very young, unusually dappled brown and white she-cat stared at her former home with a sigh. Twoleg monsters had started coming to the meadow and have started tearing it up and started building things that have confused many cats. However, the Twolegs had started taking the cats of the Keepers group and no one knows what has happened to them. But it made the she-cat sick to think about that. She was the only from her litter and her mother died from the birthing, and so she always had her father at her side. Then the Twolegs came and took him away from her. And they should have paid more attention to the signs! There were rumors from kittypets and loners passing their knowledge to the Keepers that the Twolegs were planning on making a 'park' whatever that was. They didn't think too much about it, and the dappled she-cat was disgusted in herself for not realizing that.

She clawed at the ground angrily and glanced at the sky. Her expression soon changed as she saw the stars start to twinkle in the night sky. The sun was beginning to fall into the ground. And very far away, she could see water sparkling from the sun's faint rays. She sighed and walked back to near the forest that was where the rest of the Keepers were staying. She soon came upon a small cave and went inside and was about to be hit by the drop of water from the ceiling.

She was about to head to a den made out of brambles where she and three others, the other leaders that had started running the

group, when she was stopped by a dark and brown mottled she-cat with wide gray eyes. Her fur was dark and it was one of the sleekest pelts. Ever since the Twolegs came, they had scared all the food and few cats looked like they were heathy anymore, and while the she-cat knew that this she-cat was always helping others, she was very pretty and was well build and strong unlike the dappled she-cat who was skinnier. "Fuzz!" She gasped. Fuzz blinked at the she-cat that had always been helping Fuzz through all of the drama that has been going. "Wolf? What is it?" Fuzz asked.

Wolf looked at Fuzz with distress in her gray eyes. "Scratch is gone." She rasped out. "He was trying to catch a vole when he got hit by one of the monsters that is tearing our home." She explained, glancing at her paws. Fuzz groaned, closed her eyes, and hung her head to the ground. Scratch was the father of one of the younger cats, Oat. And knowing the insecure tom, he wasn't going to take it well.

"I- I tried to save him, I promise I did, Fuzz!" Wolf cried out. Fuzz looked at the older she-cat and wrapped her tail around her. "I know that you would have done anything to help your campmates. Wolf seemed to have been comforted from those words, but there still seemed to be some guilt in her eyes. Fuzz only took in a deep breath. Wolf was so loyal, that she took all the sudden death that was happening very badly and forced so much responsibility on her. Despite the fact that there were four actual leaders.

"Everything is going to be okay, alright?" Fuzz asked her. Wolf didn't respond. Fuzz narrowed her green eyes. "Alright?" She repeated more harshly. Wolf nodded. "Alright." She murmured and padded away. Fuzz only shook her head. That she-cat really needed some supported.

"Fuzz?" A soft whisper mumbled behind her.

Fuzz looked around to see an old, skinny unusually spotted pale and white she-cat with one cyan eye and one amber eye. This elderly she-cat was a very good friend to Fuzz who had idoled her when she was younger. "Oh, hello, Borage." Fuzz greeted in respect for the older healer. Borage looked at her worriedly through with her strange, two-colored eyes. "What are the Twolegs doing? Are they

almost done?" She asked. Fuzz shook her head. "I'm sorry, but I just don't think that they're going to leave anytime soon." She answered. Borage shook her head. "I guess I shouldn't have thought of that. But it doesn't hurt to be hopeful." Fuzz looked away. "Maybe." She mumbled. The elderly she-cat looked at her. "Hmm? Did you say something?" Fuzz shook her head. "No, no." She paused. "But Wolf told me that Scratch joined the Keepers that have passed." Fuzz announced. Borage's eyes started to tear up. "I already know, Wolf told me."

Fuzz looked at her paws. "It just feels like we're dying away." Borage eyed her and brushed the stressed she-cat's spine, calming Fuzz down. Fuzz gave her a thankful look. "Why don't you get some sleep?" She suggested. Fuzz shook her head. "No, I checked one of the borders, but now I really need to hunt. I can also go find some herbs for you as well." Borage shook her head. "I may have some patients, but I can easily take them on my own. And I don't need another one. Please, go rest. I'll be in my den." Fuzz was about to say something back, but Borage was already walking away.

Fuzz looked away and walked into her den, and curled around the nest that had some goose feathers and leaves. She sighed and closed her eyes and welcomed the darkness that swirled around her.

She blinked opened her eyes. She slowly stood up and glanced around. She was surrounded by swirls of blue, purple, and black. The stars twinkled from above her. *I'm in the sky?* She wondered. *But... how?* She looked down at her paws and nearly yowled in shock and surprise. She was standing on top of clouds and as she padded at the clouds, they didn't disappear. Fuzz frowned, completely confused.

She looked around, searching for other cats. Or anything really. When she couldn't spot anyone, she started to walk around. She needed to find someone. However, she couldn't find anything. She frowned and soon sat down, giving up. "What in the world is this type of dream?" She called out. When she heard a voice that she thought she would never hear again.

"Fuzz?" A soft mew came from behind her.

Fuzz looked around and soon saw a young ginger tabby she-cat with sad, lonesome eyes. Stars were tangled in her fur, her pelt was ghostly, and her eyes glowed like moonlight. "Sunny." She murmured, walking over to the young she-cat. Sunny was a cat that had been very close to Fuzz when they were younger. But Sunny had died from a strange illness that they couldn't cure. Fuzz shuddered, remembering when she had seen Sunny start to cough out actual blood and was so, so weak.

Sunny looked at her friend with sad eyes. "It's good to see you." She murmured. Fuzz couldn't even say anything. Her throat started to dry, and her eyes started to turn misty. "It's been so long." Fuzz murmured. Sunny nodded. Sunny backed away and looked at some mist. "The Keepers are dying." She murmured. Fuzz nodded.

She sighed and looked at Fuzz. "You aren't going to survive if you stay here. The Twolegs are destroying the land as we speak." Fuzz narrowed her eyes. "What are we supposed to do then?" She asked. Sunny looked straight into Fuzz's green eyes. "You must gather the rest of the surviving cats and leave." Fuzz froze. "But what will do? Where will we go?" Sunny didn't immediately answer but did ask another question. "Have you ever heard of the warrior Clans?" She asked. Fuzz blinked in surprise. She wasn't expecting such an easy question. "Of course." Even the kits of the Keepers knew the stories of the Clans.

Many, many seasons ago, there were five ancient Clans who names were lost to history; however, the Clans went through war, famine, harsh leaf-bares, and sometimes overpopulation. This led so that some of the Clan cats would leave and make their own Clans. Kittypets and loners and rogues would get interested and either join or make their own Clans. In fact, even the Keepers were once Clan cats that wanted a more peaceful life.

Fuzz shook her head, trying to shake away the thoughts. "What does our struggles have to do with the Clans?" She asked. Sunny's expression remained neutral. "The only way to survive is to leave. And make your own Clans, following the pawsteps of our ancestors." Fuzz frowned. "But how? I'm just a young cat." Sunny looked back at her. "Don't worry, Fuzz." She walked closer and pressed her nose against her friend's head. "Don't worry, Fuzz.

StarClan will be at your side."

Fuzz was about to ask Sunny what she meant, but the world started to blur, and everything turned dark. She woke up in her nest and looked at the little group that was left of her former large group. She gazed at the Keepers and thought of what Sunny had told her. And she was right, they had to leave and rebuild. She looked outside and could see the water far, far away. That was what their new home will be. They will rebuild and grow. They can start anew.

Fuzz smiled at that future. *Will we survive beside the waves.*

Chapter 1

Fuzz - now Fuzzgoose by the words of StarClan- trekked through the sand with her group of Keepers that wanted her to be the leader. Of course, the entire group was still together, but the groups have already split into separate groups because of the leaders they have chosen to follow, the same leaders back when the Twolegs were destroying their former home.

Fuzzgoose was the leader of the group who included Wolf, now Wolfblotch, Borage who became Boragewisp, Ashmoss, Riverclaw, Amberbite, Oat who became Oatpaw and was apprenticed to Wolfblotch, and they also had a new cat join them during the journey to their new home, Sock, who became Clawpaw and was given to Amberbite. Howlkit and Honeykit had also joined Fuzzgoose's group.

Petuniablossom was another leader of a group who had included Sneezewhisker, Fluffglide, Owlmuzzle, Rattlepaw, Luckpaw, Locustkit, and Siltkit. Rattlepaw and Luckpaw were given to Petuniablossom and Sneezewhisker. A loner name Pine joined their group and was renamed Pineember.

Fierceember was leader of a group that included Sporeleap, Sloestream, Flowerchomp, Thistlefleck, Ridgepaw who was apprenticed to Flowerchomp, Murkkit, and they had also found two abandoned kittens, Cloud and Faded and took them in as well.

Lighttail, who concerned Fuzzgoose the most with his more aggressive nature, was a leader to Wisptail, Heavyshriek, Clawcurl, Budtree, Houndkit, and soon took in Snowkit.

The group of cats soon faced the water - what the kittypets called the 'ocean' - and Fuzzgoose smiled at the beauty of all of it. The sand that felt soothing on her paw pads, the ocean letting out its song of battle as the waves crashed, and the salty breeze swirled around them, blowing gently against Fuzzgoose's fur.

As the cats gazed at the ocean, there was a yowl coming from one of the apprentices. Clawpaw started to race down to the water and started to splash around in it. Riverclaw also joined in and started to tackle the apprentice. The cats purred in amusement at the sight of the cats that started to join them and play around in the water. Fuzzgoose smiled. This seemed like a good home.

However, Fuzzgoose still felt unsafe. She looked back at the cats and felt her fur start to prickle when she saw a Twoleg den in the distance. She let out a yowl which made the rest of the cats stop and looked at Fuzzgoose in confusion.

"This isn't a good place to stay, Twolegs will come during greenleaf." She explained. The cats gazed at each other with worry. "Well, what are we going to do then?" Asked Fierceember, who lashed her large fluffy tail around. Fuzzgoose looked around and sighed. "I think that we should continue searching for a home." She answered. Petuniablossom sniffed. "For all of us? I thought that we were making separate Clans." She asked. Fuzzgoose frowned. "No, we'll find one for one of our groups, and soon another, and so on."

Petuniablossom rolled her eyes. "That seems mouse-brain, let's just find our own camps and just meet up later." She said. Fuzzgoose hesitated but thought it over and nodded. "Okay, that seems reasonable." She agreed and she watched as most of the Keepers soon left her. She suddenly felt very worried, the rest of her group was so small, and it made her a bit self-conscious. She shook off the insecurity and faced her new Clan.

"Now, we must go and fend on our own." She announced. Some of the cats in the group seemed a bit troubled, but a dappled dark gray she-cat stepped forward, glancing around the cats around her. "Come on, we can find our own territory. We can get through all of this!" Ashmoss yowled. This made many faces of many cats lighten up and new confidence seemed to flow through them.

Fuzzgoose smiled at them, proud of her clanmates, even if they weren't technically a Clan. Yet. They padded across the beach, and trying to find any good spots that would be a good camp for them to call home.

"Clawpaw!" A yowled called out. Fuzzgoose looked back just in time to see the smoke gray she-cat race forward with Oatpaw coming after her. His fur bristle in embarrassment. He padded over to Fuzzgoose with a hanging head. "I'm sorry, she just dashed off." He mumbled. Fuzzgoose just sighed. "Well, I mean that's just Clawpaw." She responded. Oatpaw nodded, but looked at where Clawpaw had ran off.

There was a sudden yowl which made Fuzzgoose's fur rise up in terror. Oatpaw raised his head up with wide eyes at where the sound came from which was blocked from sight because of some large rocks. Riverclaw bashed through them. "That's Clawpaw!" He announced. Fuzzgoose couldn't help but wonder what Clawpaw had gotten into, but her thoughts were interrupted by Ashmoss who cried out, "Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go find her!" Fuzzgoose nodded and guided her group to the place where they had heard Clawpaw's yowl.

They soon entered a large clearing with the ocean still waving up onto the shore. The newly made apprentice was standing by the shore, and the Clan watched as the salty breeze whipped through her gray fur. Clawpaw walked over to them and smiled. "Isn't this such a beautiful place?" She asked and gazed around the area. Fuzzgoose followed the strange apprentice's gaze and couldn't help but agree with her.

The clearing was large and in the middle of it was a big tidepool which had some fish, seaweed, and other ocean-like creatures and plants. The rocks that had hidden the tidepools surrounded the tidepools, acting as though it was an unbreakable barrier which even continued to the shore. Near the entrance was an entrance in the rocks which Fuzzgoose guessed that led to another room. *That might be useful in the future.* She thought. A large, fallen tree branch had fallen onto another one of the large boulders which made a big den and right next to the den was a clutter of boulders which made another den. On the other side of the den, was another clutter of rocks that stretched to the shore. Some algae and seaweed and soft moss and bracken that was growing all over the clearing had separated some of the rocks, which made it seem as though they were all different dens.

Fuzzgoose smiled at the clearing. Feeling the sand in her claws and the cool breeze, she could already tell that this place would be a great home. She looked back at her new Clanmates. "Well, does this seem like a good place to call home?" She asked. She waited for a bit, letting her Clanmates murmur to each other, and soon Wolfblotch nodded at Fuzzgoose. "This seems like a perfect home." She answered. Though there were some grumblings, but Fuzzgoose couldn't tell who was talking.

Fuzzgoose smiled and quietly flicked her tail for her group to follow. She glanced around and thought of which space would be a den, including her own now that she thought about it. She looked back to see Boragewisp pad into the cave that was in the rocky barrier near the entrance. Fuzzgoose followed her into the darker cave, however Boragewisp seemed very happy. The cave was large and in the back were rock ledges that looked like they could be used for storage. "I can use this for keeping herbs!" She exclaimed happily and gazed at all the extra space. "Actually, I can use this cave for keeping our sick and injured in her." Fuzzgoose smiled, grateful that Boragewisp was already starting to prepare for the future. "Alright, I'll go send a patrol to get some cats to collect some moss for the nests." Boragewisp let out a murmur of thanks and followed her out of the den.

The cats were already playing around and making some of the lichen and moss that were separating the dens stronger and tied them. Fuzzgoose looked at the cats and thought about who she could send. She let out a yowl which made them look at her. "Boragewisp, Oatpaw, Clawpaw, and Ashmoss, you two go out and collect building materials for nests and dens. Riverclaw and I will help build dens. And Amberbite," The long-furred ginger and white cat looked at Fuzzgoose. "You will watch over the kits while we try to build our camp. Make sure that they don't do any shenanigans." Fuzzgoose saw a flash of disappointment from Amberbite, but it was so fast that she thought it wasn't even there. However, the two kits: Howlkit and Honeykit, seemed very excited for getting kitsitted by Amberbite. She flicked her tail, signaling her cats to follow the orders that she had given them.

She watched as her Clanmates soon left camp and walked over to

Riverclaw. The cat looked at the little cave made by the fallen tree and rocks that was next to the soon-to-be medicine den. They both went into the den and glanced around in at the walls of the cave. It was made out of stone, but the top of the den was made out both stone and the timber of the fallen tree. It was small, but big enough for a few cats. "You know, this would be a good den for the leader." They suggested. Fuzzgoose stopped and looked at them. "Really?" She was surprised that they had suggested that. They looked at her. "Does it not seem like a good den for you?" They asked. Fuzzgoose paused and studied the area. It seemed... calming. "I guess." She mumbled.

They cocked their head. "So, what are we going to do with it?" Fuzzgoose stopped. "Well, I think that this would be a good den for me." She gazed at the den again, scanning the cave one more time. "This would be a good place to hold private meetings." She quietly walked out, with the warrior running behind her. She looked up at the fallen tree. "And that could be used to call Clan meetings." She felt her fur begin to prickle with excitement. This would actually make a pretty good den for her and the future leaders that will come and rule over time. "I think that this would be pretty good." She admitted. Riverclaw grinned. "I knew that you were finally going to give in and give this a try." They mewed. Fuzzgoose only rolled her eyes at her friend.

"Rawr, I'm a big mean and scary monster!" Cried out Amberbite and the kits started to squeal in terror, running away. However, as Fuzzgoose watched them, she looked at the small space that was right next to her new leader den, she couldn't help but think how it could be a good place for the nursery. The den was one of the farthest away from the entrance and right next to the literal leader's den so they could be safe, and they would near the shore where they could play and with the guidance of the adult cats, they could learn how to swim.

She quickly asked Riverclaw to go inside and when they came back, they exclaimed that the den was big enough for a couple of queens, and still room for kits to play around. She said to the kits and Amberbite that that would be the new nursery and they quickly moved in. Right as the two warriors were about to inspect the

tidepools, the patrol that went out to collect materials came back with moss, seaweed, lichen, even some shells and feathers as well. Riverclaw and Fuzzgoose quickly explained the new dens and with the help of more cats they established the rest of the dens. The den across the medicine den would be for the apprentices, the one across the leader's den would be the warriors, and the one farthest away from the other two dens would be for any elders since they were the farthest away from the entrance and it seemed more guarded. However, since they didn't currently have any elderly cats, except for Boragewisp who cried out that she was a medicine cat and doesn't or never will retire, they all agreed that it would be used for any sick or injured cats if the medicine den started to get full.

[image]

The Clan soon got to work with placing the new nests and enforcing the camp walls with brambles that Ashmoss had managed to find. But the sun started to fall and while it was a beautiful sight, Fuzzgoose remembered that she had a meeting with the other leaders about how they were doing with camp and everything really.

And after calling a meeting with her campmates about it, she was about to leave when there was a sudden yowl from Honeykit. He puffed out his chest when all the attention dragged onto him, however he seemed to realize what he was doing and awkwardly stopped; letting his gaze drag onto his paws. "What is it, Honeykit?" Howlkit asked his new denmate. Honeykit looked back at the group of cats. "What are we calling ourselves?" He asked. The Clan stopped and Fuzzgoose frowned. Even with all the time they had spent, getting her from her original home, creating her group with her former Keepers and newcomers, finding this place and making camp, she had never thought about what they would call themselves. *Whatever it will be, it has to represent something about us. Or something about us.* She thought. *But what?*

Wolfblotch stood up. "How about WetClan?" She suggested. "Because we live by the ocean?" Howlkit asked. Wolfblotch looked at her paws. "I mean, yes. I was also thinking because even though sometimes we can be feeble, we can still defend ourselves. I mean,

just look at all that we've been through: We lost our home, watched as we got picked off one by one, had to leave, and lost some of our dearest friends who joined different Clans and became our enemies. But we are still strong, we 'soak' or 'wet' ourselves with pride and honor." The Clan was silent for a moment, and as Fuzzgoose thought it over, she couldn't help but agree. "Very well Wolfblotch, we shall be known as WetClan, and everyone will know our name. We will be honorable warriors, and when things strike us down, we will raise back up, no matter what!"

"WetClan! WetClan!" The Clan chanted.

Fuzzgoose smiled. She thought about the other leaders, Lighttail, Fierceember, and Petuniablossom and couldn't wait to see their faces when she announced how her Clan was already thriving. Now that she thought about it, she had heard about the stories of how Clan leaders would get nine lives, and have their names end in -star. The idea thrilled her. And as she gazed over her new Clan, she could tell that already, her old life was no more, and a new one was just beginning.

Chapter 2

Fuzzgoose padded across the sandy beach where she spotted three other cats that were very familiar. A white and unusually spotted black she-cat with heather-blue eyes, a long-furred pale smoke and white she-cat with one yellow eye and one blue eye, and a light brown smoke and white tom with gold eyes.

Lighttail was the first to notice her. "She finally managed to show up." He grumbled. Fuzzgoose felt her fur prickle at the harshness of the tom's words. He had never been the kindest of three leaders - or even just a normal Keeper - to her, mainly because she was the youngest being of sixteen moons while he was the oldest and if he wasn't a leader, he would most likely join the elders' den in just a few moons.

"Well, *excuse* me, Lighttail." Fuzzgoose responded, just as coldly. "I was helping WetClan finish build our dens." Petuniablossom blinked in surprise. "You've already finish building your dens and also came up with a name?" She asked. Fuzzgoose nodded. "Yeah, haven't you?" She asked. Out of all the leaders, Fuzzgoose and Petuniablossom had been the friendliest to each other. They were both close in age and they were both very confident in their decisions and ideas, so they both made a good friendship.

Petuniablossom shook her head. "While we have finished our dens, there seems to be a lot of Twoleg debris in our camp. It isn't much, but I'm not very surprised. We chose a place that seemed very abandoned, however, there seemed to be a gigantic Twoleg thing by the rocks where most of the debris came from. I believe that those kittypets that we met a while back called it, a 'boat'. But it was bigger than any boat that I've ever seen, and it was made out of wood." She explained. Fuzzgoose let out a sigh of relief. She didn't want her friend to be in any trouble or lagging behind the others. She paused. "Hold on, what did you name your Clan?" She asked. Petuniablossom looked at her paws. "Eh, nothing special. We named it GullClan because when we separated, we followed a gull to where

the boat was. And even more seagulls were there when we came." Fuzzgoose stared in awe. That would interesting, naming a Clan after what showed the cats to their home.

Lighttail groaned. "Can you two please stop chatting like starlings? You've giving me a headache just listening to your ruckus." He snapped at the two she-cats. Fierceember narrowed her eyes. "I thought that we said that we would come back and shared our news of what we learned, isn't that correct?" She replied. "So those two are completely allowed to share their news to each other." Lighttail mumbled something but Fuzzgoose couldn't catch it.

Petuniablossom looked at the older she-cat. "Thanks for that. By the way, where did you go off to?" She asked. Fierceember flicked her tail in acknowledgement of the thanks before answering. "My group headed to a little cave by the rocks. It's hidden and the only way to get in or out is by swimming. Luckily though all of us knew how to swim and the only problem was with the kits, but everyone is fine. At least we know that the kits wouldn't dare try to escape. Their smarter than that." Fuzzgoose frowned. "Wait- if you're in a cave, how do you see?" Fierceember didn't seem very eager to answer. "There is an opening above the cave, however it is blocked so no cat can climb down that way by brambles and other thorny things we thought of. However, we can still breath and light can still shine through, even if it's more dappled." She sighed and looked back at them. "And if you're curious, I named my group BubbleClan, in honor for my mother, Bubble." A flash of pain crossed over Fierceember's face, but she quickly hid it. Fuzzgoose didn't remember much about Bubble, she died before Fuzzgoose left the nursery, but she knew that she was respected and a kind she-cat.

Soon everyone's gaze went over to Lighttail. Who groaned again. He looked like he really didn't want to be there, however he sighed, and it seemed like he gave in. "I decided that it would be mouse-brain to leave all of our skills and techniques behind and go fishing from the ocean and judging by some of those waves in the distance, that area looks like it could kill a cat instantly. So, we went to the more, grassy areas. We are still by the beach; however, we made camp in the grasslands so that we will never forget our former home. We renamed ourselves WheatClan with all the wheat and

grass and grain that surround us." He said very quickly. "We made camp just in the middle of the grasslands, nothing too special."

When Lighttail finished his summary of what his Clan was doing, everyone awkwardly looked at one another. "Well, now what?" Petuniablossom asked. "I don't know." Fierceember replied with a shrug. "I guess that we better go home now." As the four leaders started to head back to their camps, there was a sudden call and from above a large pelican let out its 'song' to the world. Lighttail flattened his ears. "Is it trying to make us deaf?" He cried. Fuzzgoose couldn't help but agree with the angry tom, for once. *What is the feathered-brain bird doing?* She wondered.

However, Petuniablossom stopped and gazed at it as it slowly flapped its wings down towards them. "I- I think it wants us to follow it." She murmured.

[image]

The pelican looked right at the four cats and the stars seemed to shine in its eyes. The pelican let out a loud raspy call and started off. The four started to chase the large bird across the beach onto the grass.

The moon glowed softly and shined on the leaders' pelts. The wind felt colder and ruffled against her fur. Fuzzgoose shivered from the cold. They soon came upon a large cave, and they hesitated as the bird soon disappeared into the darkness. They walked into the cave and gasped.

In front of them was a large river that was glistening from the moonlight that came down from a small hole in the top of the cave. Glowing mushrooms and algae grew on the walls and stalagmites. Fierceember looked down at the calm river and glanced back at the other three cats. "There's a small stone that looks like it's made out of moonlight at the bottom." She explained. "Well, what are we supposed to do with it?" Lighttail asked. Fuzzgoose stared down at the calm water and saw the stone that Fierceember was talking about. It was small and smooth, round and curved and shining like starlight.

"I think that we should get it." She said. Before anyone else could say anything, Petuniablossom rushed forward and splashed into the river. She soon comes back with the shining rock in her mouth. As she got up and shook the water off her, she placed it down by her paws. Petuniablossom stared at the stone and didn't speak. Fuzzgoose shivered when another gust of cold wind brushed in. Mist started to surround them. Fuzzgoose flattened her ears when the cave suddenly got very quiet.

"Press your nose against the stone." Petuniablossom murmured. Fuzzgoose felt hesitant but she followed her friend's orders. She pressed her nose against the small stone and felt its cold touch. She suddenly realized how tired she was and closed her eyes.

When she woke up, she realized that she was back in the same starry fields that she had been before. She looked around but couldn't find the other three leaders. *Where are they?* She wondered.

"Don't worry, they're safe." Said a familiar voice.

Fuzzgoose looked behind and saw Sunny. "Sunny!" She cried. The younger she-cat smiled. "I'm Sunnypaw now." She explained. Sunnypaw looked at the starry fields. "I'm here to guide the fallen warriors of WetClan to StarClan." She continued. Fuzzgoose frowned. *StarClan? Isn't that where Clan ancestors go?* She gulped, suddenly realizing that one day she may see more of her own cats here. She shook her head and looked down at Sunnypaw. "So, what I am, or we," She said, flicking her tail at the thought about the other leaders. "What are we doing here?" She asked. Sunnypaw smiled. "You are here to receive your nine lives." She answered.

Fuzzgoose gasped. *My... nine lives?* She thought. At first, she was worried about it, but as she thought about it more and more, the idea made her excited. She gazed around the starry fields but couldn't find any more cats. "So, how does this work?" She asked. Sunnypaw smiled. "Just wait for it." She replied ominously. As she finished her words, more cats started to appear, but what made Fuzzgoose's stomach tightened as the fact that she recognized so many of the faces. *Some of these cats are cats from the Keepers.* She looked back at the starry meadows, the smell of prey, and the stars shined so brightly she felt better that her former friends were living

in such a great paradise.

Sunnypaw looked at Fuzzgoose expectantly. "Are you ready to get your nine lives?" She asked. Fuzzgoose gulped and glanced back at her former friend and nodded. "I am." She replied. Sunnypaw also seemed a little unsure of herself, but she shook her head and stretched forward to press her nose against Fuzzgoose's. "With this life, I give you the knowledge to when to fight, and when to choose peace." She murmured. Fuzzgoose shuddered when the life flushed through her. She felt herself start to burn, anger flowing through her body, and she felt as though she could tear any cat that would hurt her Clan. However, the rage soon disappeared with a soothing cool breeze, and she felt herself relax. She gazed back at Sunnypaw and couldn't help but feel disappointed as she watched her friend leave.

Fuzzgoose looked at the crowd of cats to see who would come forward. However, she really wished that she hadn't. A brown tabby tom with white paws and shining amber eyes walked over to her. Her throat felt dry when she saw her brother Hiss. His eyes shined with excitement and smirked at his sister. "I hope that you would manage to would survive, but I never imagined you as leader." He announced. Fuzzgoose smiled sadly. "I remember when you used to play with the other kits as the leader." She responded, thinking about her former kit days. Hiss purred and soon pressed his muzzle against her own. "With this life, I give you humor. Use it to lighten your Clan even during the darkest of times." As Fuzzgoose received the life, she felt warmer and lighter as though she was a cloud. She stopped when the feeling went away and stared as her brother walked away.

The next cat that came forward was a large, black tabby she-cat with cobalt eyes. Fuzzgoose gasped. "Nightingale?" She murmured. Nightingale was the mother of Howlkit who died giving birth to him. Nightingale nodded, her eyes tearing up. "Hello Fuzzgoose. It's nice to see you again." She soon pressed her own muzzle against her head, and murmured, "With this life, I give you happiness. Use this life to find happiness in all the little things of the world." This life made Fuzzgoose feel light and happy and thought that everyone was fine. When it was gone and as Nightingale walked away, she

stopped and gave Fuzzgoose a quick glance. "Keep an eye on my son, okay?" She asked. Fuzzgoose nodded. "I will." She promised.

A dappled she-cat with bright green-yellow eyes walked forward with a harden gaze. Fuzzgoose felt her fur prickle. "Shell," She murmured, dipping her head at the she-cat. Shell was once Fuzzgoose's rival when they were younger. She looked down at her paws. "Listen, that was moons ago." Shell mumbled. She looked back at Fuzzgoose and gave Fuzzgoose her fourth life. "With this life, I give you adventure. Use this to find adventure in your leadership." Shell soon walked away. Fuzzgoose gasped because she had new energy and felt curiosity grow inside of her, wanting to find new things about the world around her.

The next cat that came forward was a bright ginger tom with hazel eyes. Fuzzgoose's eyes widened. "Scratch!" She cried out, recognizing Oatpaw's father. Scratch dipped his head in greeting. "Hello, Fuzzgoose." He greeted. He pressed against Fuzzgoose's head and gave the next life. "Take this gift, the life of empathy. Use empathy to understand other's pain or ideas." Fuzzgoose felt a calming wave wash over her and she watched as Scratch walked away. She wondered what would happen if she told Oatpaw that she saw his father.

The next cat was unfamiliar to Fuzzgoose. It was a pretty tortoiseshell she-cat with bright cyan eyes. "I am Applestar. I was once leader of TansyClan, a Clan that lives in the forest by WheatClan, close to the beach." Fuzzgoose frowned. She didn't think too much about if Clans were already so close to their new home, she would have to keep an eye on them. Applestar shook her head. "Anyway, I am here to welcome you to new Clan life." She walked forward and pressed her muzzle against Fuzzgoose's forehead. "With this life, I give you leadership. With this life, use your leadership abilities to lead your Clanmates to greatness." With the new life, she felt herself have a burning passion to protect her Clanmates no matter what.

When the former Clan leader soon left, a kit had replaced Applestar. She was a bright dappled ginger and white she-cat with yellow eyes. Fuzzgoose's belly tightened at the sight of the kit. The she-kit was the sister of Honeykit, Bumble, who had died on the journey to

the beach. The she-kit looked at Fuzzgoose who soon lowered herself so the she-kit could reach her. Bumble smiled. "Hi, Fuzz!" She pressed against the older she-cat. "I give you the life of pride. Your pride of your Clan will guide you through the toughest times. However, don't let it blind you." She warned. A sudden blaze started inside of Fuzzgoose who let out a gasp of pain, the life started to burn brighter and brighter and she let out a sigh of relief when it vanished. She watched as the young she-kit strutted away. She stopped and gave Fuzzgoose another glance. "By the way, tell Honey that I said hi!"

Fuzzgoose nodded and she looked back to see a gray cat with bright heather blue eyes walked forward. They didn't have the scent of a she-cat, nor a tom. "I'm Graytrail. I lived during Applestar's reign," They explained, nodding at Applestar in the crowd. She turned and looked back at Fuzzgoose. "With this life, I give you the gift of making difficult decisions. During your time as leader, you will have to make tough choices. Use this gift to make decisions for these tough choices." As the cat pressed against Fuzzgoose's muzzle, a burning pain started to grow from her heart and grew. She felt insecure and she wondered if she did the right thing. However, the pain soon lifted, and she felt her confidence returning. She quietly prayed that she was almost done with the life-giving ceremony as she watched them walk away.

"You are almost done." Said a very familiar cat. Fuzzgoose looked up to see a pretty light brown and white dappled she-cat with green-yellow eyes. "Mom..." Fuzzgoose murmured and felt her throat tightened. Her heart ached at the sight of her mother, Weed. Weed smiled at her daughter and licked her between the ears. "I'm so proud of you." She murmured. Fuzzgoose looked back at her. Weed smiled back. "With this life, I give you determination. Determination in your actions and ideas will lead you. But be care, and make sure that you don't turn your determination and confidence into recklessness." She warned. Fuzzgoose felt as though she could do anything, determined to make her Clan great.

Weed smiled and backed away. "I hail you by your new name, Fuzzstar. Your lives are no more. You have now received the nine lives of a leader, and StarClan grants you guardianship of WetClan.

Care for your young and old; honor your ancestors and traditions of the warrior code; live each life with pride and dignity. Use your new lives wisely."

"Fuzzstar! Fuzzstar!" The starry cats chanted. Fuzzstar puffed out her chest in pride and soon the starry fields started to fade and black out. She woke up with the other leaders. They had explained that they were also given nine lives and they were all now Fuzzstar, Petuniastar, Fiercestar, and Lightstar. They all said good-bye before padding away back to their Clans.

When the Clan saw her came back, they started to gather around her. Fuzzstar quieted their questions before leaping onto the tree above her den. *Hmm, HighTree?* She thought. "Let all cats old enough to..." She paused and looked at the tidepools. "To... pad through the water gather around the HighTree!" She yowled. She watched as her Clanmates gathered around with the kits bouncing around excitedly. "I have been greeted by StarClan, our ancestors and deceased, have given me nine lives and I am now Fuzzstar." She explained. She waited when the Clan had quieted done when they started chanting her new name. "But now I must pick a deputy, a cat that will become leader after me." She meowed. That was what quieted the cats down.

She looked at the cats down below. She thought about the stories of the warrior code and how the deputy needed an apprentice. But she knew about Amberbite's more rebellious nature and looked at another cat that was very loyal and hard working. "I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The deputy of WetClan shall be Wolfblotch." She announced.

"Wolfblotch! Wolfblotch!" The Clan chanted. The mottled she-cat stared at her leader in shock before dipping her head in respect. "I can't believe this. Thank you so much Fuzzstar. I promise that I will be the greatest deputy this Clan will ever have." She promised. Fuzzstar nodded. She called the Clan meeting to a close before padding back into her new den. She looked around her new home and smiled. She was Fuzzstar. And she was going to leave her mark.

Chapter 3

Oatpaw stared around the camp, thinking about how his life had already changed. He just... couldn't believe that he was now a part of something that he heard stories about when he was a kit! It just was very surprising. But he was very happy that he wouldn't be alone in his new den. He looked at his denmate, Clawpaw, who was looking at the fresh-kill pile, specifically a shrew, very hungrily. *Even if she is a little weird.* He thought.

He looked down at the sand that started to poke at her pads. He sighed and looked at the shore were the waves crashed, and he while he understood that the waves were dangerous, the waves lapped onto the sand innocently. He shuddered and looked at the other warriors. *Is this really what I want to do?* He wondered. *Do I want to be a warrior?* He sighed and looked down at some fish that on the fresh-kill pile. He sniffed. *Do I even want to be a Clan cat?* He asked himself. He didn't know if he could answer that.

He sighed again. However, a small shadow covered him and as he looked up, he saw his mentor, Wolfblotch, looking down at him. His ear twitched and he felt very insecure. At first, his mentor was just a normal warrior, and it was perfectly fine. But now she was deputy, maybe even leader one day. He felt like as though he had a lot of expectations given on him now that his mentor was given a high rank. An honor. Oatpaw didn't know if he deserved that. Wolfblotch cocked her head. "Hey, I was thinking that we should do some training together. Maybe work on some battle moves?" She asked.

Oatpaw looked at his mentor. He nodded slightly. "Uh, sure. It would be useful to learn new moves. Especially since we live somewhere completely different." He added, glancing back at the waves that lapped onto the sand. That's when he noticed that Clawpaw was gone. "Wait- where's Clawpaw?" He asked, feeling his fur prickle. Wolfblotch didn't seem too frightened, however. "Amberbite took her out to show her something." She explained.

Oatpaw let out a sigh of relief. "Oh, okay." He watched as his mentor started to walk toward the exit, confused. Until he realized that they were leaving, and he scampered over.

Wolfblotch's whiskers twitched. "Did you think that I was randomly leaving you?" She asked. Oatpaw shook his head which started to lower. Wolfblotch frowned and rested her tail onto her apprentice's back soothingly. "Hey, no one is going to leave you behind, okay?" She meowed. "Okay." Oatpaw replied. He tried to raise his head up and Wolfblotch nodded happily. "Come on," She mewed. "Amberbite is going to another one of the tidepools near BubbleClan territory. Let's go practice near the grass." Oatpaw followed his mentor to some softer grass. Though, there were some drier grasses which poked at his paw pads. He tried to ignore it, but it was still a little annoying.

Wolfblotch soon stopped and glanced back at Oatpaw. "This seems like a good start." He crouched low and wiggled her flank. "Alright, I'm an enemy that is coming to attack you directly. What do you do?" She quizzed. Oatpaw frowned, trying to remember. "I- I don't know." He responded. Wolfblotch waited patiently. "Just try something out." She responded. Oatpaw felt himself start to panic. "Um, dodge?" He guessed. Wolfblotch nodded. "Yes, then what?" She asked. Oatpaw calculated what would happen in his head. *Well, if I was attacked, I would dodge and attack back?* The ginger tom looked back at his deputy. "I would slash at the cat's side." He answered. Wolfblotch shook her head. "No, you would unbalance the attacker." She responded.

Oatpaw frowned. "Unbalance? That doesn't seem to make any sense. I would attack them, so they're wounded." He explained. Wolfblotch flicked her tail. "I'm talking about an attack against you, and you are still a young cat. Your attack would take that to their advantage and would be bigger and stronger than you." She argued. "But if their wounded, then they couldn't fight back! They would have to stop!" He snapped back. Wolfblotch sighed and sat down, her fur started to calm down after bristling. "I'm sorry for my outburst, but if you listen to me, I have a reason." Oatpaw stopped and walked over to her. "Since you are younger and smaller, you could be faster and more agile than your opponent. If you managed to unbalance

them, that would make them winded, giving you either another chance to attack or run away." She explained. Oatpaw listened to his mentor and when she finished, he understood where she was coming from. Shame started to spark in his pelt. Why did he have to argue with his mentor, his deputy? Even his future leader? "I understand, and I'm sorry." He mumbled. Wolfblotch smiled and gently licked the apprentice reassuringly. "I'm glad. I'm not trying to harsh on you, I just want to prepare you." She replied. Oatpaw looked back up at his mentor. He smiled, his trust and comfort for the older she-cat started to grow. "Can we continue training?" He asked. Wolfblotch nodded and the two continued training for the rest of the morning before returning home.

When Oatpaw returned to camp, he quickly grabbed a fish from the fresh-kill pile and padded over to Clawpaw who was ravenously eating a shrew. He tried to ignore the fact that her claws kept scratching the already dead prey. But he knew that it wasn't Clawpaw's fault, she couldn't sheathe them. It still made him a little uncomfortable. Clawpaw looked up at him. "Oh, hi Oatpaw!" She said cheerfully. "What did you and Wolfblotch do today?" She asked. Oatpaw shrugged. "Nothing special. We just did some training." He answered. Clawpaw nodded. "That's neat. Amberbite and I went out and saw an octopus!" She shrieked excitedly.

Oatpaw raised his head and his tail flicked in surprised. That seemed very interesting. However, the idea of seeing those large creatures with the many arms seemed terrifying way as well. "It was really cool." Said Clawpaw, who started to roll onto her back, her eyes drifting onto the clouds above. Oatpaw rolled his eyes and continued eating. He looked up and saw that the little Honeykit started to climb onto HighTree. He frowned. *What in the world is he doing?* Oatpaw wondered.

"Let all cats old enough to-" The little kit started to yowl. "Honeykit!" Amberbite called out, their ears flattening. "Get off the leader's tree." They snapped. Honeykit groaned and slowly started to climb down. Though he did seem a little nervous. Amberbite sighed and leaped onto the tree, picked up the two-moon-old kit, and leaped down. They gently dropped Honeykit on the ground and watched as Honeykit walked over to Howlkit, grumbling. Oatpaw's

whiskers twitched in amusement. Clawpaw sat up and purred. "That is one troublesome kit." She mewed. "If I was older, I would love to have him as an apprentice." Oatpaw shuddered. He could just imagine the chaos those two would make. Though, he couldn't think about what it felt like without that. He liked his Clanmates, and he knew that they would be by his side.

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Boragewisp was quietly cleaning the medicine den, preparing for any wounded or sick cats that would come in the future. She looked around at it and walked outside, ready to gather herbs for the storage. As she started to pad out, Riverclaw ran up to her. "Can I join you?" They asked. Boragewisp blinked in surprise but nodded. "Alright, the more the merrier." She agreed. As the two started to head out, Boragewisp started to scent for herbs.

She had to go nearer to the forest that was close to the beach. Eventually she scented the musty and minty smell of thyme and was about to collect it with Riverclaw following her actions. However, a sudden breeze slowly flowed through them. Boragewisp gasped, the scent of a familiar cat started to waver to her nose. She looked up and saw a starry figure, and her heart lurched. Riverclaw looked up and gasped. They shuffled out of the way to give her and the starry figure some time to themselves.

"Sunny?" She murmured. "Sunnypaw." The StarClan cat responded. Boragewisp nodded, sitting down and resting her tail on her paws. "So, Sunnypaw, what are you doing here?" She asked. Sunnypaw sighed, her image flickering. "You must tell the rest of the Clan, that during the full moon, all four Clans must meet together in peace." She paused and looked at a ridge farther away. Boragewisp looked at the ridge as well and saw a large willow tree blowing with the breeze. *Huh. I wonder what that's all about.* She thought before turning back to look at the apprentice. "And every half-moon, you medicine cats must go to the MoonPebble in the Rushing River to talk with us." Sunnypaw continued. The leaders had named the pebble that had transported them to StarClan the MoonPebble and that the river where it was founded was called the Rushing River. Boragewisp flicked her tail. "Alright." She murmured.

She quickly dipped her head. "Thank you for sharing this information with me." She meowed to the StarClan cat. Sunnypaw smiled and pressed her cold, starry muzzle against her head. "Don't worry, Boragewisp. You're a great medicine cat. I can tell." She murmured. Boragewisp smiled and raised her head, comforted by those words. She gasped and watched as Sunnypaw's spirit started to wisp away. She went back and picked some thyme, thinking about what Sunnypaw had said. She flicked her tail at Riverclaw to follow her back to camp.

When they got back to camp, they saw that Honeykit was grumbling back other to his denmate Howlkit while Amberbite was giving him a strange look. The two apprentices, Clawpaw and Oatpaw, had started sharing tongues, while Wolfblotch was watching the kits with amusement. "I sure do wonder what happened here." Riverclaw mumbled to the older she-cat who murmured in agreement.

They both headed to the medicine den and placed the herbs on the shelf, before Riverclaw padded outside after helping to carry the herbs. Boragewisp quietly placed the herbs in a neat pile before heading outside as well. She was about to settle down when Fuzzstar and Ashmoss came crashing into the camp, with Ashmoss looking a lot worse with many scraps on her. Boragewisp's head snapped up. "What happened?" She asked, racing over to help Ashmoss. Fuzzstar hesitated. "We were hunting when we saw a fox feeding on a seagull. We tried to get it, but the fox was harsh and managed to get Ashmoss. Luckily however, it wasn't a horrible attack. It could have been much, much worse." She explained. Boragewisp led the two she-cats into her den.

She placed Ashmoss on one of the nests of the den and examined her. She noticed a few scrapes and cuts, but nothing serious. Boragewisp looked at Fuzzstar who was twitching her tail worriedly, but there was a glint of confidence in her eyes. Boragewisp walked over to her leader and put her paw on her leader's shoulder. "Don't worry, she's fine. I'll go out and find some cobwebs to patch her up, but it really is nothing bad. She should be able to go about her day as normal." She meowed. Fuzzstar looked so much more relaxed with that answer. "Thank you, Boragewisp.

You are a great medicine cat." She said. Boragewisp dipped her head.

Boragewisp remembered what Sunnypaw had told her. She led her to a corner in the medicine den. "Sunnypaw visited me." She admitted. Fuzzstar looked at her in surprise. "Really? What did she say?" The WetClan leader asked. Boragewisp quickly explained what Sunnypaw told her about the Gathering and the half-moon meetings. Fuzzstar was quiet for moment, before nodding. "Alright, thank you for telling me." She murmured before turning away and walking away. Fuzzstar hesitated for a moment. Boragewisp cocked her head at her leader. "Is something wrong, Fuzzstar?" She asked. Fuzzstar sighed. "It's just that... I guess that the burden of leading our group, is crushing me." She admitted. Boragewisp blinked. She had never realized that dappled light brown and white she-cat would have trouble with the Clan. She had always been so confident.

Boragewisp walked over to her leader and wrapped her paws around the she-cat. "You aren't alone, Fuzzstar. You have me, your deputy, and your entire Clan at her side." She said, trying to comfort her. Fuzzstar looked at the older she-cat and nodded. "Thank you, Boragewisp." She murmured. Boragewisp led her outside of the medicine den.

Boragewisp watched as her friend walked away and wished she could help her even more. But she knew that she wasn't alone, the entire Clan was by her side. Boragewisp flicked her tail and walked back into her den.

Chapter 4

About a moon had passed since the Clan had been made. Ashmoss had managed to fully heal. As Wolfblotch looked around she watched as Amberbite and Clawpaw walked away to the entrance. However, Clawpaw seemed a little nervous than normally. Wolfbloch frowned and wondered if there was anything she could do to help. She stood up and soon saw Oatpaw.

Wolfblotch smiled, ever since he was apprenticed to her she had always felt safe and comfortable around him. She went over to the fresh-kill pile and picked up a trout, her mouth watering. As she picked it up, she walked over near some of the warriors. Just a little farther away was Fuzzstar who was with Boragewisp, who were talking about the first 'Gathering' that the Clans would have very soon.

Fuzzstar had explained to the Clan about Boragewisp's visit with Sunnypaw and that all the Clans will gather around the willow tree on a cliff not too far away. *I wonder how Pineember and Sporeleap are doing.* She wondered, thinking about her two friends that were now in different Clans.

Sporeleap and Wolfblotch were pretty nice to each other when they were normal Keepers, but Sporeleap did teach her everything that she knew and Wolfblotch always trusted her. Meanwhile when Pineember joined the group while they were walking to the beach, Wolfblotch had befriended the nervous and insecure she-cat very quickly. Though, Pineember had never told Wolfblotch were she got her snake-bite scar from.

When she finished the fish she walked over to the apprentice den where she saw Amberbite watching over his apprentice as Clawpaw and Oatpaw tackled each other. At first, Wolfblotch was worried that Clawpaw was going to hurt her own apprentice because of her unsheathed claws, but Clawpaw seemed very careful about where she put her paws. Eventually, the older Oatpaw managed to pin the younger apprentice down.

Wolfblotch smiled and looked at Amberbite. "Amberbite?" She mewed. They looked at her. "Yes Wolfblotch? What is it?" They asked. "What if we took our apprentices out?" She asked. Amberbite sniffed and raised their head. "I guess." They muttered. Wolfblotch felt her pelt prickle. She knew that Amberbite had never liked her that much, and something told her it was because she had become deputy, but she hoped that it wouldn't get in the way in their teachings. Wolfblotch gathered the apprentices and quickly walked out of camp.

As they walked out of the camp, she glanced at the apprentices who were walking around the camp with excitement. Though Wolfblotch still noticed the way Clawpaw seemed more hesitant. *It's probably nothing.* She thought. She glazed down at her apprentice Oatpaw, who seemed more confident than he had started off as. Wolfblotch couldn't wait to see her apprentice become a warrior.

"Can we go to the tidepools?" Clawpaw asked. "I want to see if that octopus is still there!" She exclaimed, jumping up and down. Amberbite's whiskers twitched. "Again?" They purred. "You keep wanting to go see that creature." Clawpaw's tail swished. "Because it's so cool!" She replied. Wolfblotch purred at the she-cat's response. "Okay." She mewed. Amberbite gave her a fierce look before looking back at their apprentice.

Clawpaw started to dash off toward the tidepools farther away. Oatpaw flattened is ears and his hazel eyes widened. "Clawpaw, wait for me!" He cried and raced off. Amberbite rolled their eyes. "Apprentices." They laughed before running after them. Wolfblotch quickly followed them.

As the wind brushed against her fur, the salty breeze started to choke Wolfblotch, and she had to stop. She glanced at the waves that where splashing onto the shore, licking the sand like a tongue on a wound. She smiled, even though the Clan was still getting used to the new place, Woflblotch felt safe. At peace.

"You coming?" Shouted a voice that Wolfblotch quickly recognized as her apprentice. "Yeah." She replied and dashed off to the tidepools. When she got there, Amberbite looked back at her. "What took you so long?" They asked teasingly. Wolfblotch didn't answer

right away. "I guess that I got distracted looking at the waves." She admitted. The ginger and white cat stared at her for a few moments before walking over to their apprentice. Clawpaw was staring at something that caused all of the other three cats' attention to focus on it.

A large creature with eight arms flailing around was calming drifting under the surface of the water. "Wow, it's the octopus we saw last moon!" Clawpaw squealed. Oatpaw looked nervous. "What if it gets us?" He asked with his voice started to shake. Wolfblotch quickly rested her tail on the dark ginger tabby tom. "Don't worry, we'll be careful." She promised. Oatpaw didn't look so certain.

Amberbite walked in front of them and flicked their tail. "Well, I guess that we better start a lesson, right Wolfblotch?" They suggested, looking at their deputy for approval. Wolfblotch nodded. "Right, right." She walked up next to the ginger and white cat. Amberbite didn't seem to hesitate. "The ocean is new to all of us, so it holds many secrets and dangers. One of those dangers is an octopus, like the one you see right there." They started, pointing their tail at the octopus that lazily waved one of its tentacles at them. Wolfblotch shuddered. While they didn't think too much about the creatures when they moved, it was later confirmed that they have secret beaks hidden by their tentacles.

As the two mentors discussed about octopuses and other dangerous creatures, Oatpaw seemed to be paying very close attention while Clawpaw kept falling into a hunting crouch, keeping an eye on the strange animal. She clearly wasn't taking things seriously. When she kept annoying the mentors for the fifth time, Amberbite sighed and called for everyone to have a break.

Wolfblotch watched as Clawpaw angrily walked over to a rock that had some shells and other things like muscles attached to it. "Hey, are you okay? You've seemed tense the entire day. And those lessons didn't seem to help." The mottled she-cat asked. Clawpaw sighed and glanced down at her claws. She flexed them and winced as though it hurt. "I guess..." She trailed off, looking away. "I guess that I will always be an outsider." She admitted. Wolfblotch blinked in confusion. "What do you mean?" She asked. Clawpaw sighed again. "You know what I mean. Look at my claws! I can't sheathe

them. And everyone knows that I act differently too." She mewed. Wolfblotch felt herself flinch. She remembered when the Keepers were traveling to the beach, and they had met Clawpaw, a very young kittypet who had called herself Sock. Everyone had been a bit on edge, mainly because she could pull her claws in. Sock had told them that it was because of an incident that happened when she was very young and instead of shame, she took pride in it. She asked to be renamed Clawpaw to show that she was still strong. Wolfblotch never knew that Clawpaw was secretly dying in the inside. "All I remember is that I had cruel Twolegs. Something... happened. I'm not sure what. But now I have pain in paws. It hurts so badly and my skin keeps getting tore open, infection used to come too." Clawpaw started lower herself down and curl up into a ball. "I feel helpless. I changed my name to take pride in my differences, but now I feel like I'm cursed." She mumbled. Wolfblotch blinked. She had never realized how hard Clawpaw had at life.

The black and brown mottled she sighed and rested next to Clawpaw. "Hey," She mewed and touched some of Clawpaw's cheek fluff. The apprentice looked back at Wolfblotch. "You got the entire Clan at your side. We will always be there for you." Wolfblotch said, and gently licked her. Clawpaw seemed to become less tense and calmed down. "Thank you, Wolfblotch." She murmured. "And for the record, I'm glad that you're deputy." The gray smoke she-cat added. Wolfblotch felt touched by that.

When Wolfblotch stood up, Clawpaw still hesitated. Wolfblotch frowned. "Is there something wrong, Clawpaw?" She asked. Clawpaw looked up at her. "Well, I..." She shuffled her paws. "I had this really strange dream." She mewed. Wolfblotch cocked her head. *What does she mean?* She wondered. She settled down and placed one of her paws on one of the young apprentice's. "Can you tell me about it?" She asked. Clawpaw hesitated. "When I went to sleep, it started off normal. But then flashing scales and feathers from fish and birds started to appear. Bloodied claws tried to attack me and when I tried to escape, I couldn't escape. Then waves from the ocean washed them all away. The water was so cold, but so... soothing at the same time. I felt protected. And then I woke up." Clawpaw explained.

Wolfblotch was quiet. She was very surprised by the description of the dream. It honestly sounded like a vision. "I'll tell Boragewisp about this." She promised. Clawpaw still looked troubled, however. Wolfblotch licked Clawpaw gently, who looked back at her. Clawpaw snuggled closer to her.

[image]

Amberbite called to them. "Come on, let's go back to camp!" They called. Wolfblotch stood up, following up with the gray apprentice. Wolfblotch soon lead the other three cats back to camp and when they come back, they all head to do different things. Oatpaw and Clawpaw, who both looked more relaxed, went to the apprentice den while Amberbite headed to the nursery who had been assigned to watch over the kits whenever they had the ability to. Just in time too because Honeykit was trying to climb the HighTree, about to call a Clan meeting. Again. Wolfblotch's whiskers twitched in amusement because that kit was going to give someone a heart attack.

Wolfblotch looked back to see the medicine cat Boragewisp come back with large, fuzzy leaves with the occasional pale purple flowers. As she watched the unusually spotted pale and white she-cat go into her den, she recalled her promise to Clawpaw and headed to her den.

Boragewisp looked at her when she finished placing the herbs. "Oh, hello Wolfblotch. I was getting some mallow." The old she-cat narrowed her eyes. "Is something wrong?" She asked. Wolfblotch quickly explained Clawpaw's dream and Boragewisp listened, not saying anything. "Thank you for telling me this." She meowed. Wolfblotch felt her fur prickle. "What does it mean?" She asked. Boragewisp closed her eyes and sighed before opening them again. "I can't say that I'm correct, but I believe that it is an vision from StarClan saying that we will go through many troubles, but we are protected and safe." Boragewisp explained. Wolfblotch frowned. "What dangers though?" She asked. Boragewisp shrugged. "I have no clue. But we must be wary." She mewed. "Thank you again, this knowledge is very helpful." The medicine cat thanked her again.

Wolfblotch headed out of the den and looked at around at her Clan.

She trusted them, and she knew that no matter what dangers may come, everyone will have each other's back. They were a community. They were a Clan now. And even if some cats didn't have the best relationships with each other, they would still be loyal to one another, at least for Wolfblotch's case. To the end.

Chapter 5

It was the night the Clans would have their first Gathering. As Fuzzstar watched over her cats from HighTree as the sun was high in the sky, her fur prickled with worry. She didn't know how the other leaders would behave. She knew that even though they all were raised in one group, they were all enemies now. Fuzzstar sighed and as she watched her Clan, she noticed Wolfblotch organizing patrols.

Well, there's one way to keep this out of my mind. She thought. She leaped down from the HighTree and padded over to her deputy. "Can I join one of the patrols?" She asked. The mottled black and brown she-cat jumped in surprise when Fuzzstar spoke, which made the young leader purr in amusement.

Wolfblotch seemed to calm down and smiled. "Sorry, Fuzzstar. I didn't see you." Fuzzstar snorted with amusement. "That's obvious." Wolfblotch rolled her gray eyes. "Anyway," She mewed, returning back to Fuzzstar's question. "Of course." Wolfblotch looked around and caught sight of Ashmoss and Riverclaw. "Ashmoss! Riverclaw! Can you join Fuzzstar's patrol?" She asked the two cats. "Oh, absolutely." The unusually dappled dark gray and white she-cat mewed. Riverclaw nodded from behind.

Fuzzstar was silently grateful that they had agreed. "Alright, let's go." She meowed to her patrol, flicking her tail to the exit. Riverclaw nodded and bounded forward, their eyes shining, and tail raised up high. Ashmoss purred and rolled her eyes at the troublesome cat. "Watch where you're going!" She called out jokingly right before Riverclaw would walk straight into the tidepools. The gray and white cat stopped and looked back. "Thanks!" They call back. Fuzzstar purred in amusement and raced forward, ready to really lead the patrol.

She led her cats toward the border, and Fuzzstar was padding around, her mind completely focused on this patrol. When they reached the Clan border, she stopped and called her cats to mark

the borders. As they started to separate, Ashmoss hesitated. "Do you all smell that?" She asked, her nose wrinkling. Fuzzstar hadn't noticed the strange smell until Ashmoss pointed it out. It was fresh and disgusting, but very familiar. Fuzzstar just couldn't remember what it was. Riverclaw opened their mouth to taste the air, when they closed it, their hazel eyes were wide. "Dog." They whispered.

Fuzzstar froze. *What's what it is!* She realized. Ashmoss looked at Fuzzstar. "Well, what will we do?" She asked, excitement starting to spark in the older she-cat's cyan eyes. "Do we chase it off?" She asked. Fuzzstar looked among her Clanmates. Thinking about it, she felt new confidence start to flow through her. "Yes, we're going to find that dog and drive it off. We won't let it bother us again." Fuzzstar answered.

While Ashmoss nodded excitedly, Riverclaw looked a bit more nervous. Fuzzstar ignored the warning in her head and charged forward. Following the scent, they spotted a small brown dog with an ugly face. Signaling her cats to hide, she crouched behind a bush and studied the dog. *Stop overthinking.* She told herself. *Just go for it.*

When the dog was sniffing around at the dog, Fuzzstar leaped forward at it. Her fur was spiking upward, her claws were unsheathed, and her eyes were in narrow slits. The dog barked in surprise at the ferocious she-cat suddenly jumping at it.

"Go eat dirt, you mange-pelt!" Yowled Riverclaw who ran up next to Fuzzstar, their pelt also bristling. "Run away to your Twolegs, you annoying piece of fox-dung!" Growled Ashmoss who padded up on the other side of Fuzzstar. With the support of her two Clanmates, Fuzzstar walked closer to the dog, ready to attack it. However the dog seemed... scared. With the three cats, the dog yelped with a scared, shaking bark and intimidation shined in its eyes. "Get out of here, and never come back." Fuzzstar growled, slashing at the dog's face and drawing out its blood.

The dog howled and dashed off. Fuzzstar relaxed, letting her fur fall flat and sheathing her claws in. She let out a sigh of relief and turned to face her Clanmates. "Thank you for having my back there." She mewed gratefully. Ashmoss blinked in surprise. "Why did you think that we wouldn't? We're in this wild game called life

together." She meowed. Riverclaw skipped around excitedly. "That was amazing! What's next?" They asked. Fuzzstar let out a *mrrow* at Riverclaw. "Well, we better head back to camp so I can warn the rest of the Clan." She answered. Riverclaw sat down for a moment. "Yeah, that makes the most sense." They replied, seeming very pleased with themselves.

Fuzzstar signaled for her Clan to follow her back to camp. On the way there they managed to quickly catch some land prey, but Fuzzstar wished that they could stop for a moment to get some fish. She had grown used to the taste and really enjoyed it. She felt hunger start to pang at her stomach, but she ignored it and continued the trip back home.

When they returned the patrol had quickly set down the prey on the fresh-kill pile. Wolfblotch noticed them returning and walked over to her leader. "Well, what happened?" She asked curiously. "Dog." Fuzzstar replied, her eyes scanning a good section to leap onto HighTree. Wolfblotch's eyes widened. "A dog? Is anybody hurt?" She asked. Fuzzstar shook her head. "No, it was just a small one. Easy to scare. But I still think that I should tell the rest of the Clan. Just in case." She answered. Wolfblotch murmured an agreement.

Fuzzstar leaped onto the tree and quickly called a meeting. "Let all cats old enough to pad through the water, gather around the HighTree for a Clan meeting!" Fuzzstar yowled. She watched as her confused and worried cats started to surround the fallen tree. "Ashmoss, Riverclaw, and I had scented a small dog and have chased it away. While it may not come back right away, I want you all to know this and to keep an eye out if it comes back. If you smell any dog scent, tell me or Wolfblotch immediately. We are still a new and young Clan, and I will not have any of my warrior be joining StarClan yet." She explained. The Clan nodded and seemed to accept the news very well.

And while Fuzzstar was on the HighTree, she noticed that the sun was slowly going down and she almost instantly remembered the Gathering that would be later today. "Also," She added. "Since the Gathering is tonight, I would like to let all of you come, however, someone will have to watch over the kits." She mewed. Honeykit stood up. "Oh come onnnnn, why do we have to stay behind?" He

asked. "Because you're a kitten." Oatpaw reminded him. Honeykit grumbled something under his breath. Ashmoss gazed at the kits for a while before looked back at Fuzzstar. "I'll stay behind. I can keep these troublemakers entertained." She said.

Fuzzstar dipped her head in thanks for the she-cat, grateful for the dappled she-cat to volunteer. "I will announce when we will be leaving soon. That is all." She meowed, ending the meeting. As the Clan started to go back to their usual duties, Fuzzstar slid down from HighTree and managed to snag a fish from the fresh-kill pile and quietly went into her den. After ravenously eating the fish she went back outside to check on her Clan. She looked back up at the sky to see the sun start to set and decided that they should probably get going.

She yowled at her Clan, who all stood up at her sudden call. Quickly understanding what it was for, they grouped up and quickly left camp with Ashmoss, Howlkit, and Honeykit behind. Fuzzstar looked up and saw a white seagull fly over them with stars that weren't out yet shining in its eyes. Fuzzstar, with wide eyes, started to chase the bird, with her Clan following behind her. "After it!" She called. Racing after the bird, she took note of the path that they took. Eventually they came upon a large cliff and the seagull seemed to have vanished. "It's gone." Oatpaw murmured, stating the obvious.

Clawpaw wiggled her headquarters. "Well, what are we waiting for? Let's get up there!" She cried and leaped onto one of the ledges. Amberbite looked aghast. "StarClan couldn't possibly make us climb up a *cliff* just to go to a meeting!" They mewed. "That's because that didn't want that." Said Boragewisp, walking over to a smoother part of cliff. Angling her head, Fuzzstar realized that the smooth rock was carved out like a path. "Let's go!" She cried and bounded for the path. Clawpaw jumped down from the ledge she was on and joined the rest of the cats.

When the cats reached the top, the first thing Fuzzstar saw was a large willow tree, blowing gently from the breeze. The light of the moon glowed on it softly, and the tree looked like it radiated moonlight.

"Well, I guess that *someone* finally decided to show up." Mewed a familiar voice. Fuzzstar looked back at the willow tree and soon saw the silhouette of a light brown smoke and white tom, glowing gold eyes staring back at her coldly. Lightstar soon stepped out into the moonlight, and along with him other cats as well. As Fuzzstar looked around and recognized many other WheatClan cats. She flicked her tail for her Clan to ease and disband. Almost instantly, Wolfblotch headed over to where Wisptail was watching her with a curt expression, Boragewisp went over to talk to Heavyshriek, and the rest of the Clan went to talk to their friends. Fuzzstar padded over to the willow tree and leaped forward, unsheathing her claws to grip the bark. It was soft and felt very nice for Fuzzstar's pads, unlike the jagged rocks where she lived. When she climbed onto the same large and sturdy branch Lightstar was on, she casually walked over to him and gave him a respectful nod. "Well, I'm here now, aren't I?" She mewed back, just as coldly. Lightstar only sniffed and raised his head higher.

Soon later, GullClan and BubbleClan soon arrived around the same time as each other. Fuzzstar had caught notice of how happy Fiercestar looked and farther back, the WetClan leader noticed Thistlefleck and Flowerchomp of BubbleClan having their tails entwined and eyes shining happily. *It seems like love is already spreading amongst us.* Fuzzstar thought. Meanwhile she saw Petuniastar giving Owlmuzzle strange glances and shuffling her paws awkwardly. While Fuzzstar knew very well that Owlmuzzle was a very... aggressive she-cat, she thought it was cute how her friend was acting. It was plainly obvious that the white and unusually spotted she-cat was in love, but Owlmuzzle didn't seem to notice. Fuzzstar sighed and went over to chat with Petuniastar. "Are you okay?" She mewed. The other she-cat jumped in surprise. "Oh! Fuzzstar! I didn't see you there. Uh, yeah, I'm fine. Why do you ask?" She replied. Fuzzstar smirked. "Oh please, it's obvious that you're in love." Petuniastar froze. She sighed and soon relaxed. "Okay, I may or may not have a crush on Owlmuzzle." Her gaze flickered to the brown she-cat down below before back to her friend. "But she doesn't know." Petuniastar said. "What if she doesn't like me?" Fuzzstar laughed. "Of course she's going to like you. Who wouldn't?" She joked. Petuniastar seemed a lot better from her friend's words.

A cough sounded from behind them and Lightstar gave the two young leaders annoyed looks. "Well, if you two are done gossiping like starlings, I'd like to get this meeting started." Before either she-cat could say anything, the old tom yowled to the cats below and they soon quieted down. "I shall start." Lightstar said, flicking his tail. "I would like to start off saying that soon after I became leader, Wisptail and Budtree had found a burrow with a strange scent and they were attacked by a wolverine. They tried to fight it off and run, but Budtree got caught and now has a mangled tail. She is currently still in the medicine den, but I have faith in my medicine cat that she will be okay." His voice was harsh, however, Fuzzstar could detect fear in it. She knew how small WheatClan was, and if they lost a cat already, it could be the start to their downfall. An ending before a beginning.

Lightstar soon continued. "Anyway, during this moon I would happily like to announce that Clawcurl now identifies as a tom." He mewed and nodded toward the long-furred, unusually spotted silver and white cat. Clawcurl puffed out his chest as the Clan cats started to mew congratulations to him. "Houndpaw had also been made an apprentice and I am her new mentor."

"Houndpaw! Houndpaw!" As the Clans cheered her name, the tortoiseshell she-cat seemed to shrink down. Fuzzstar looked down at her with pity. Houndpaw had always been a nervous cat, but it looked like she still hasn't moved away from that trait and by judging the dark circles under her eyes, it looked like she still never got good sleep. *Becoming the apprentice of a harsh mentor will do that you, I guess.* Fuzzstar thought, looking back at Lightstar. "That is all." Lightstar mewed and nodded to one of the Clan leaders that he seemed to respect a little more, Fiercestar.

"Things in BubbleClan have been quiet recently. Sloestem has gotten a bit of a running nose, but he is an excellent medicine cat so I'm not too worried. I do have to say however that one of my patrols had noticed of dark clouds in the horizon. I'm lucky that they decided to turn back, they could have ended up drowning in that storm." The long-furred, pale smoke and white she-cat started. Fuzzstar had flashbacks of a storm that happened near the beginning of the moon and shuddered. It wasn't the calmest storm

in the world. Fiercestar's two colored eyes started to shine happily, however. "Although, I am very pleased to announce that two of our cats had feelings for each other and are now mates! Thistlefleck and Flowerchomp!" She cried.

The two cats scooted closer to each other as the Clans chanted their names and congratulated them. They seemed to take pride from it. "That is all." Fiercestar finished off and glanced at the younger two leaders. "I'll go next." Petuniastar mewed, taking her place in the front. "GullClan has been doing well. At the start, a blight had infected the herb stores, however, Fluffglide had managed to find catmint which is very helpful. Meanwhile Owlmuzzle and I had found a red fox and fought it off." She looked at Lightstar. "I think that it was heading to your border." Lightstar nodded. "Thank you for telling me." He mewed. Petuniastar looked back at the Clan cats. "That is all that I have to say." She took a step back.

Fuzzstar knew that it would be her turn next. She took one step forward, and confidence started to build up in her at every step she took. She looked down at the crowd of cats, ready to make her speech of everything that had happened in her Clan. "I do not have much to say about my Clan, other than Ashmoss, Riverclaw, and I had gone out and found a dog earlier. I wanted to warn you three in case that it comes over to your side of the border." Fuzzstar informed the other leaders. She looked back. "Other than that, I don't have much to discuss." Boragewisp looked up at her leader in surprise but said nothing. Fuzzstar flicked her tail. She didn't want to bring up the vision, since she was sure that it only regarded her Clan. Why should she care about messages from other Clans? Unless it involved her Clan, but the vision didn't seem like it did. "The Gathering has now ended. Go back to your Clans and have a peaceful night." Fuzzstar mewed and climbed down the tree.

She nodded for the Clanmates to follow. As she did, she noticed that Clawpaw was lagging behind, talking to GullClan apprentice named Luckpaw. "Clawpaw!" She shouted. "Coming!" The young apprentice replied and raced after her. With her Clan behind her, Fuzzstar looked forward, ready to go home.

Chapter 6

It didn't feel like much time since the Gathering, but that's how life is sometimes. It goes by so fast that it feels like you can't keep up. As Oatpaw stared down at his paws, he sighed and rolled onto his back, staring up at the sky in the apprentice den. He knew that by the next moon, he would be a warrior. Something that he never thought he would be. A warrior, just like the stories that he would listen to as a kit. The legends his father told him during the quiet nights.

The reminder of his family made him sigh and curl up in his nest. His missed his family, so much. And with him becoming something that was just a tale that older cats made up, he just wished that his parents could see how much he has grown.

"Oatpaw?" Mewed a soft voice. Oatpaw looked up and saw his mentor, Wolfblotch. "Oh, hi." He mumbled. Wolfblotch looked at him with a worried expression. She walked over to him and sat down, wrapping her tail around the young tom. "Is something wrong?" She asked. Oatpaw sighed. "I guess that... I don't know. I'm homesick? I want to have my family, Scratch and Flicker and Wren." He answered. He never really knew Flicker; she had died a few days after giving birth to him and his sister Wren. But he always loved listening to his father's stories about her. And for a while, he had his sister Wren with him. But she got taken by Twolegs when they started invading their former home.

It... hurt to think about.

Wolfblotch's eyes scanned over the young tom. "You know that you have the entire Clan to support you, right?" She asked. Oatpaw sat straight up when she spoke. "Of course I know that! It's just..." His gaze returned to the ground. "It just doesn't feel the same." The mottled she-cat curled her tail around Oatpaw. "Well, we'll always be here for you." She paused. "Do you want to hear something?" She asked. Oatpaw looked at her. "Um, sure." He replied, confused at what she was talking about. "I've decided that I may never retire."

She admitted. The ginger apprentice blinked at her in surprise. He had never thought about what Wolfblotch thought about retiring, but it seemed like she really wanted to stay as the deputy. "I've thought about it, and yes I still understand that I'm pretty young. But I want to remain deputy throughout my life. I want to prove to my Clan that I am strong." Wolfblotch explained.

Oatpaw stared at his mentor. "Well, if that's what you want, I won't say anything against it. But maybe when your older, you'll rethink about it? Won't you want to rest?" Wolfblotch shook her head. "I'm loyal to my Clan, until the end." Wolfblotch responded.

Feeling a bit awkward, Oatpaw went back to shuffling his paws. Wolfblotch nudged him. "Hey, why don't we go out of camp for bit?" She suggested. *Well, if it will get my mind off things...* He thought. "Alright." He mewed gently and slowly got up. Wolfblotch smiled, walking out of the apprentice 'den'. Oatpaw followed her and gazed around the camp, watching as cats chatted to one another, some argued, and he also noticed Honeykit climbing onto the top of the rocks of the nursery. Wolfblotch was frowning at the young ginger kit, so Oatpaw guessed that she knew that standing up on a bunch of jagged rocks high up isn't the best idea.

When the two cats soon left camp, they immediately went hunting. As they walked over to the tidepools near the ocean, they found a good area to hunt near the shore. Oatpaw looked down at the salty water, his eyes scanning it. He walked back toward the sand and frowned. He didn't see his mentor anywhere. *Where is she?* He wondered. Suddenly feeling panic, he looked around widely for his mentor when a large shadow covered over him. Oatpaw looked up and was tackled to the ground by the black and brown mottled she-cat. "Get off me!" He cried, smiling and trying to push the large and strong she-cat off him. Wolfblotch purred and slowly got up.

Wolfblotch looked at a rock and leaped onto it, and turned to face her apprentice, flicking her tail at the water. "Try going closer to the water, there'll be more prey." Wolfblotch explained. Oatpaw nodded and walked over to the water. He gazed at the ocean, and the sun started to shine onto it, almost blinding Oatpaw.

He steadied his breath before walking into the water. The water at

first was cold, and he felt it start to tug at his fur gently, trying to welcome him into the waves farther away from the shore. He shuddered; he could only just imagine one of his cats getting dragged out to sea. At first, he wasn't super pleased with his fur getting wet, but he ignored the weird tingling in his skin.

Little fish zoomed around him, which caused Oatpaw to feel the sudden ripples in the water caused by the fishes. Every now and then one of the fishes would splash the water, getting him even more wet. He sighed. *That's life I suppose.* He thought. He looked up to the sky and calculated where the sun was. He switched positions and made sure that his shadow didn't fall onto the water. He waited calmly for a few moments, which turned into seconds, and soon into minutes. Suddenly recalling that his mentor was behind him, he looked down at the water searching for fish. Just anything to catch. It felt like all the fish from before had left. *Is the world laughing at me or something?* He wondered, twitching his tail impatiently.

Eventually, he noticed a small glimmer of scales under the water. *An anchovy!* The ginger apprentice realized. He thought how strange it was to see just a lone anchovy, considering how they normally came in large schools. Ignoring it, he stretched out one of his paws, unsheathed his claws, and sent it crashing down. However, the anchovy seemed to have noticed him and swam away right before his paw came crashing down, sending a large wave of salty ocean water at his face. "Ack!" He yowled in surprise, falling onto his back in shock and sending even more waves. Oatpaw felt himself panic, and flapped his paws wildly, trying to get to the surface. But he couldn't see anything, the pale waves that crashed onto the water was so hard to see through that all Oatpaw could see in general was the sky and the sunlight coming down to warm his face.

Realizing that there was still sand under his paws, he managed to get up from the water and reach back to the surprise. He let out a gasp of shock from the process and quickly let in a breath of air to calm himself down. He looked back to see Wolfblotch who was scurrying over to him with a terrified look on her face. "Are you okay?" She cried. Oatpaw looked away in shame. He couldn't

believe that he got scared by the prey and nearly *drowned* because of that mouse-brained mistake. "Yeah, I'm fine. Can we just continue hunting?" He replied. Wolfblotch stared at him for a few moments, still looking unsure. "Alright." She sighed and walked back to the shore, shaking off the droplets of ocean water stuck to her fur. She gently started to groom herself and wrinkled her nose. "Ugh, this salt will be the end of me." She muttered.

Oatpaw soon realized that he too was extremely wet, and it felt a little uncomfortable. He quickly shook himself off and soon continued to hunt. He managed to catch that anchovy from before, with Wolfblotch remarking that he got revenge on it, but missed a herring, and two sardines. Oatpaw felt bitter and self-conscious by all the mistakes that he kept making. Normally he was really good at hunting. *Just not today.* He thought with a sigh.

He saw another fish and leaped for it but came crashing back down into the water again. Anger and frustration and shame and insecurity started to build up in Oatpaw. He couldn't take it anymore. He walked over to his mentor who gave him a worried look. "Are you okay, Oatpaw?"

Oatpaw didn't respond, instead he looked up at Wolfblotch and tears started to roll down his hazel eyes. "Why can't I catch anything?" He cried and started to sob. "Am I really that useless?" He asked.

Wolfblotch's eyes widened. She rushed to comfort her apprentice and gave him gentle licks. "Of course you're not useless!" She exclaimed. "Why would you ever think that?" Oatpaw only groaned and started to hiccup. "Because...I didn't...catch anything." He explained between hiccups. Wolfblotch curled her tail around her apprentice. "You still tried. That's all that matters." She meowed back." Oatpaw still seemed to have doubts, but the tears started to dry up and he used to paw to wipe the rest away. "Thank you Wolfblotch." He murmured. Wolfblotch smiled at him and rested a paw on his shoulder. "We'll always be here for you, okay Oatpaw?" Oatpaw smiled. "Okay." He soon shook the water off his pelt which caused Wolfblotch to laugh since most of the water got onto her instead.

They quickly picked up the anchovy to bring back to camp. Wolfblotch stopped. "You know, I kind of want to take the long way home. Let that time clear our minds a little." She suggested. Oatpaw hesitanted, but soon nodded. "Alright." He replied, finding it almost impossibly hard with the fish in his mouth.

As they were heading back, a strange scent started to clog up Oatpaw's nose. His nose wrinkled in disgust because of the gross scent. "Ew, what is that?" He asked. Wolfblotch narrowed her eyes. "Fox." She replied. Oatpaw shuddered. The scent felt very familiar when Wolfblotch explained it. He knew that those predators were almost deadly to all cats. Especially from all the tales that the cats would talk about them fighting off foxes when they were back at the meadow. *But... is the fox red or gray?* Oatpaw wondered. From the Keepers' descriptions, it sounded like gray foxes were much more smaller and easier to take down then a red fox which was more murderous.

He started to dig a hole and placed the anchovy down, quickly burying it so he could pick it up later. Wolfblotch looked at him. "Should we go for it? I understand if you want to go back home. You've already be through a lot today and-"

"No." Oatpaw interrupted. "If there is a fox, then there most likely would be food. And considering how I much I got... I think we should go it." He mewed. "But I mean, I shouldn't be saying anything. You're the deputy and I'm just a random apprentice." Oatpaw added quickly. Wolfblotch hesitated but nodded. "Okay, we'll follow the trail." She soon started to part open her jaws to scent the area. When she caught the scent, she flicked her tail Oatpaw in indication to follow her.

The soon came upon a gray fox feeding on something that Oatpaw wasn't quite sure what it was, but it smelled like food so they had to get it. Wolfblotch nodded at her apprentice and cocked her head toward the right. Understanding what she meant, Oatpaw started to stalk the fox on the right, his pelt slinking around in the grass. He prayed to StarClan that the grass would manage to hide his bright orange pelt. He didn't want to be crow-food.

Wolfblotch went to the left, being nothing but a shadow with her

pelt. Still slinking across the grass, they soon cornered the ignorant fox. Wolfblotch nodded toward Oatpaw and leaped from the grass, letting out a screeching yowl. The fox stopped and whipped around only to get attacked by Wolfblotch. Oatpaw came running forward, terror bristling his pelt, but he ignored it, and leaped onto the fox as well, biting and clawing at it.

The fox seemed terrified, and when Wolfblotch slashed at its eye it shook the two cats off and ran away, howling in defeat and terror.

"You should stay away if you know what's good for you!" Wolfblotch hissed at the fox as it scampered away before looking back at Oatpaw who was relieved that neither of them had gotten hurt, nor even scrapped. Wolfblotch looked at the meat that they had just received then back at Oatpaw, grinning. "Are you happy now?" She asked cheerfully. Oatpaw paused for a few moments, thinking about all the food that they had just got. The Clan would feast tonight!

Oatpaw returned his gaze back to Wolfblotch and smiled. "I am." He replied.

Chapter 7

Clawpaw had never been a part of the Keepers group. She had been a kittypet named Sock ever since she was kit. She couldn't remember everything, but she does recall that something had happened when she was really little. Now her claws had been stuck, and they tore at her skin, and it hurt so much but only sometimes. Her Twolegs would constantly give her medicine. At first, she didn't know why but she just never really trusted them. Maybe it was because *they* were the reason, she now has the strange disability. But they had been so stressed and worried about her constantly. After being in Twoleg-place so long, she 'knew' some kittypets and they would be warning her all the time how they would take her to the Cutter, and she never have kittens. But that never happened. It seemed as though her Twolegs were so scared that they didn't even take her to the medicine Twoleg or whatever they called themselves.

It had been a few moons ago, but Clawpaw remembered sitting outside, basking in the sun as Sock. She had heard rumors of other kittypets about strange cats walking though the Twoleg-place to go to the ocean. She thought that the kittypets were just joking around, just like they normally did. Making fake rumors like how one cat liked another, even when they didn't really or if they saw a ghost cat, but it just turned out to be something from one of those strange Twoleg images in the strange boxes that were called a TV.

But then she met one of them. A young black and light brown mottled she-cat with blue eyes had calmly met her when Clawpaw was still basking. She remembered the conversation as clear as the ocean that calmly swept onto the shore.

"Hello there, I'm Luck." The strange she-cat paused. "-paw. Luckpaw." She introduced herself.

Sock cocked her head. She quietly chuckled to herself because of the name. ***Hehe, that's a funny name.*** *She thought. "Can I call you*

Lucky?" She asked. The strange she-cat blinked in surprise then paused. "I don't see why not." She replied. "What's your name?" She asked. "Sock." The kittypet had answered almost immediately.

Sock noticed that the stranger seemed... lost. "Is something wrong?" She asked. Luckpaw paused for a moment. "Yes. You see, me and a group of cats came from this meadow which is getting destroyed by Twolegs. We wanted to go to the ocean, but we got lost here in Twoleg-place." Luckpaw explained. Sock's eyes widened. ***Didn't Bonnie mention some traveling cats?*** *She wondered and tried to recall back to the what the white she-cat had said. "I was asking some of kittypets here if they could help us, but they either were very defensive and refused, or were pretty terrified." She mewed.*

Sock thought about her home, her Twoleg nest, and the life she's had. She looked down at her claws that would forever be unsheathed before returning her gaze back at Luckpaw. "I'll help you." She mewed. Luckpaw's blue eyes widened. "Really?!" She exclaimed. Sock leaped down from the fence she had been resting on. "Yes, I'll help you." She repeated. Luckpaw purred. "Oh thank you so much, you don't know how thankful I am for your help." The young newcomer meowed happily. "No problem, I'll always be here to lend a helping paw." Sock responded.

Clawpaw smiled to herself still curled up in her nest as she replayed the memory over and over again in her mind. At first, she didn't think about leaving her Twolegs, but with all the stress and scarred trauma in her, she wanted a fresh start. She asked to be renamed Clawpaw in honor of her disability, to prove that she would still be worth something. Even though Clawpaw and Luckpaw were now in different Clans, they still met up during Gatherings. They had a strong bond by now. Luckpaw was the only one who called Clawpaw by her kittypet name sometimes as a nickname, while Clawpaw still called her Lucky.

Clawpaw curled around her nest, resting her tail on her muzzle. It had been a few days since Oatpaw and Wolfblotch had caught that massive pile of strange food. And while Clawpaw wasn't sure what it was, it was delicious. The Clan was well-fend with all the new food and the prey that was already on the fresh-kill pile. While Clawpaw had been eating, she had noticed how proud and happy Oatpaw looked when the Clan was happily eating. Wolfblotch had

murmured quiet words of encouragement and pride. Clawpaw wondered what had happened, but Clawpaw was happy that her denmate was starting to get more confidence in him. Especially since he would be a warrior soon.

"Clawpaw?" Amberbite mewed, padding into the apprentice den and nudges her gently with their paw. Clawpaw groaned and looked up at Amberbite. "Can't I sleep a little longer?" She begged. Amberbite rolled their eyes. "Come on, Clawpaw, please get up." They muttered, nudging her again. Clawpaw groaned and got up onto her paws.

They soon went outside of the den and almost immediately Clawpaw raced over to the fresh-kill pile. Amberbite walked over to her and gave her a look. "You can eat, but you've got to be quick." They said almost as though they read her mind. Clawpaw nodded and quickly took a mouse and ate it ravenously. When she finished, she quickly groomed her whiskers so none of the mouse blood got on it and followed her mentor out of the den.

"So, what are we doing today?" She asked. Amberbite smiled. "I thought that we could go near the shore again. Have a fun time there." They answered. Clawpaw felt her fur raise excitedly. "Can we go near the GullClan border? I want to see if I can see my friends there." She asked. Amberbite seemed hesitant. "I don't know..." They mumbled, suddenly looking uncomfortable. "Pweaseeeeeeee?" Clawpaw begged.

Amberbite sighed, shaking their head left to right. "You're such an odd one, you know?" They said. "Alright, we can go near their border." Amberbite mewed. "Yay!" Clawpaw cried, bouncing up and down. An unexpected sharp pain raced through her and Clawpaw looked down at her claws, seeing that some blood was starting to bleed out from tearing her skin. *Got to be more careful.* She thought to herself.

As they got closer to the border, something rippled by the water. Clawpaw froze, her eyes wide and her heart started to thump. She saw large, dark gray figure lurking under the water. She couldn't see it, but it felt so... wrong. Amberbite stopped and looked back at their apprentice. "Is something wrong, Clawpaw?" They asked.

Clawpaw was silent, staring at the water with wide eyes. Fear zapped through her so fast, and she flattened her ears. Amberbite followed her gaze and narrowed their eyes. "Let's get out of here." Amberbite mewed. "I don't like that thing." The ginger and white cat continued on and Clawpaw followed him, feeling extremely scared.

Clawpaw looked at Amberbite. "What do you think it was?" She asked. Amberbite frowned. "I'm not entirely sure. Maybe it was a large serpent." The warrior suggested. That statement made Clawpaw think of an entirely new question. She looked up at them. "Amberbite, why don't snakes have any legs?" She asked.

Amberbite stopped. "I-I- uh, what?" They responded, clearly not expecting that question. "Why do snakes not have any legs?" The smoke gray she-cat asked. Amberbite still looked confused. "Because that's how nature wanted snakes to be like? I don't know." They answered. Clawpaw sighed, wishing that someone would give her the answer to her question.

Eventually when they did reach the border, they started to play their scent markers. A very odd scent wavered over to the WetClan cats, with caused them to spat and cough at the strange odor.

"WetClan cats!" A cat let out suddenly.

Clawpaw looked around widely just before the world was blotted out by a dorsal-striped, light brown tabby tom landing on top of her. "What are you doing so close to the border?" He asked harshly, his bronze eyes glittering. Clawpaw soon realized that this was Rattlepaw, one of the GullClan cats. "Rattlepaw!" Amberbite exclaimed and picked up the tom's scruff and threw him onto his side of the border where two more cats appeared. Sneezewhisker, the GullClan deputy, and Luckpaw, his apprentice.

Rattlepaw flattened his ears at Amberbite. "It's *Rattlegleam* now." He hissed. Clawpaw frowned. *He's a warrior? He's only elevon moons though!* She thought. Amberbite frowned and looked at Sneezewhisker. "Really? Is Petuniastar really playing favorites?" He asked. Sneezewhisker's fur began to bristle. "Petuniastar is not playing favorites at all! Rattlegleam proved that he was a great

warrior, he before becoming twelve moons old! That just proves it even farther." He snapped back coldly.

Luckpaw looked at her two Clanmates and sighed. "Will you two shut up?" She mewed. The two brown toms looked at her in stunned shock.

"There's no reason for you two to be fighting. Rattlegleam," She started, turning to face her former denmate. "They were only marking the border. And when have they ever trespassed or made us angry?" Rattlegleam opened his jaws, but nothing came out. He soon closed them back up, seeming very awkward about his actions. "You were right to challenge them, and I understand why you want to prove yourself; you just received your name and think that you have to show the Clan that you deserve it, but I don't think that making another peaceful Clan our enemies is the right way to do it." Rattlegleam was still silent but seemed to understand.

Luckpaw turned to face her mentor. "And they were alone curious by the fact that Rattlegleam became a warrior earlier, in fact if I am remembering correctly, he is the first cat to receive his new warrior name since he got here. They're bound to be curious. They aren't breaking the warrior code just by asking a few questions." Sneezewhisker was quiet for a moment but nodded. "Well, I guess I can't go against your logic." Then he added much quieter. "Even if you are just an apprentice." Clawpaw felt her fur prickle. She wanted to defend her friend, but Luckpaw only seemed to ignore him. Sneezewhisker looked back at the two WetClan cats. "We're sorry by the sudden attack, it won't happen again." Sneezewhisker looked at the newly-made warrior sharply. "Right?" Rattlegleam seemed to shrink under the deputy's gaze. "Right." He muttered.

Amberbite didn't seem to like it, but they accepted the apology anyway. "Well, thank you for telling us about what's been going on in your Clan and we accept your apology" They kicked Clawpaw, who soon nodded her head up and down very quickly. Amberbite looked at Rattlegleam. "Congratulations on the new name." They mewed to the dorsal-striped tom who only gave them a quick nod back to them.

The mentor and apprentice soon left the border and Clawpaw

looked at Amberbite. "What are we going to say to Fuzzstar?" She asked. Amberbite flicked their tail. "Nothing about the border skirmish. It was just an accident." They paused for a second. "Well, it *probably* an accident. But it's nothing to worry too much about so I don't think we should mention it." The ginger and white non-binary cat explained. The gray smoke she-cat nodded in agreement. "However," Amberbite continued. "I will be telling Fuzzstar about that *thing* we saw earlier." They added. Clawpaw shuddered, remembering the strange dark creature that lurked beneath the water.

When they got back to camp Amberbite nudged Clawpaw toward the apprentice den. "Go and rest, we went through quite the adventure today and you said that you wanted to continue sleeping." They said. Clawpaw didn't need to be told twice. She quickly padded over to her nest as her mentor walked over to Fuzzstar with a serious expression on their face. Clawpaw collapsed onto her nest dramatically and closed her eyes. She soon fell into dreamland, and left her odd reality behind.

Chapter 8

Fuzzstar walked out of her den, stretching and letting her fur get warmed by the sun. There was a sudden yowl and Fuzzstar stopped and looked up to see Clawpaw and Oatpaw chase Riverclaw around. "Liar!" Clawpaw shrieked and leaped onto the gray and white cat, dragging them down. "Noooooooo!" Riverclaw yowled back. They soon freed themselves and ran off, with the apprentices continuing to chase them.

Fuzzstar's whiskers twitched, amused. She looked at the warriors' den where Riverclaw had come out from, and Ashmoss was covered in seaweed, cursing at the ground. Fuzzstar smiled and walked over to her. "Are you okay?" She asked jokingly. Ashmoss looked at her and brushed the seaweed off of her. "Yeah, Riverclaw pulled another one of their pranks and blamed it on the apprentices." She explained. Right after she said that, the apprentices managed to tackle Riverclaw to the ground again.

Ashmoss smiled. "I think that the apprentices managed to get their revenge." She laughed. Fuzzstar's whiskers twitched in amusement. *Well, I better not get into a fight with them.* She thought.

Fuzzstar looked at Wolfblotch who was currently talking to some other cats. The brown tabby she-cat walked over to the deputy who stopped talking to the other cats. "Hello Fuzzstar!" Wolfblotch greeted cheerfully. "How are you doing?" She asked. "Good." Fuzzstar answered, sitting down next to her. Wolfblotch hesitated. "How are you feeling after the Gathering?" She asked.

The second Gathering had happened a few days ago, and while WetClan didn't have too much to announce, the others had a lot going on. Budtree and Clawcurl had become mates, Heavyshriek got a running nose, Rattlegleam had become a warrior and actually had gotten poppies to wear, Locustpaw became an apprentice, Sloestem got better, and Flowerchomp was expecting kits. The Clans were getting busier, but nothing was happening to her own Clan. And Fuzzstar didn't know if she should be grateful for that or

disappointed.

"Well, I'm just happy that we seem everyone seems to be doing well." The brown tabby she-cat mewed finally. Wolfblotch nodded and looked around at the Clan. "You know, our Clan is still pretty small..." She murmured. Fuzzstar nodded in agreement. It honestly made her a little uncomfortable and it bothered her more than anything else. "You know, I'll go to the border and see if we can find anyone." Fuzzstar said suddenly and stood up. Wolfblotch nodded. "Alright," She scanned the camp until her eyes settled on two other cats.

"Ashmoss! Riverclaw! Can you go join Fuzzstar on a patrol along the border?" She asked. Ashmoss, who had finally gotten all the seaweed off of her, nodded. "Sure." She mewed as Riverclaw tossed the two apprentices off them and walked over to Fuzzstar, looking exhausted but showing no regret. "I'll come too." They added.

Fuzzstar nodded. "Alright, let's go then." She meowed and led her Clanmates out of the camp. When they were walking along the border, Riverclaw looked around. "Maybe we should go further out." They suggested. Fuzzstar nodded, not seeing any cats currently and they headed farther into the territory. Watching the tidepools they ignored and walked closer to the where they had found the Twoleg nest they had seen all those moons ago.

The three Clan cats seemed very hesitant near the nest and scanned it. Riverclaw lashed his tail and kept giving every bush, every glade of grass a glance. The unusually dappled brown tabby she-cat stopped and looked at her fellow Clanmate with unease. "Riverclaw?" She mewed when she noticed that the gray and white cat had ran off somewhere.

Ashmoss ran up to her leader who looked very worried. "Do you know where Riverclaw went?" She asked. Fuzzstar looked back at the unusually dappled dark gray and white she-cat with worried green eyes. "I thought you know where they went." She mewed back, shifting her paws. Ashmoss's cyan eyes widened with anxiety. *Where are they?* She wondered. She flicked her tail to Ashmoss. "Let's search the area. Hopefully they didn't get injured." Ashmoss nodded and two the two she-cats became to examine the clearing.

Thoughts of worry of how Riverclaw could have gotten captured by Twolegs, or they got hurt, or worse kept clogging her mind. *Just push it away.* She told herself. She paused when she heard a rustle in the bushes behind her. She looked around and saw a blur of gray and white hurtling at her.

"Hey you two!" Riverclaw shouted after crashing out from the bushes, knocking into the other she-cats. "There you are!" Ashmoss exclaimed, cuffing their ears. "Where were you?" Fuzzstar hissed, her fur bristling in anger. "We thought that you that got lost! Or worse! What if got kidnapped by the Twolegs?" She snapped. "I already lost so many friends all those moons ago, I don't want to lose you too." She hissed, remembering her mother and brother Weed and Hiss.

Riverclaw winced at their leader's harsh words. "I'm sorry, but you'll never guess what I've found!" They cried. Riverclaw turned around and rushed back into the bushes. Ashmoss and Fuzzstar gave each other confused glances before following them. They raced through the territory that was slowly starting to get unfamiliar.

An acrid and sour scent started to waver over and Fuzzstar wrinkled her nose. The strange scent and smoke started to burn Fuzzstar's face, and she squinted her green eyes, feeling water started to form in them. The group of cats soon came across a black path that stretched across the territory, in the middle of it were strange yellow lines. Fuzzstar felt her belly clenched when she realized that it was a thunderpath. The rocks on it started to jitter suddenly and the strange scent came again. In a flash, a monster raced across the thunderpath and hot breeze followed it. It made Fuzzstar feel sick.

"Is this what you wanted to show me?" She asked. Riverclaw paused. "Not exactly." Confused, Ashmoss cocked her head. "How so?" She mewed. "There's more to it." Riverclaw explained. They took off again, this time along the thunderpath. Fuzzstar and Ashmoss followed Riverclaw up the thunderpath and soon a cat silhouette came into view.

They came across a small fawn and golden she-cat who was breathing unsteadily. Blood was pooling around her fast and Fuzzstar realized what was going on. "Don't worry, we're here to

help." Fuzzstar said, trying to comfort the injured cat. However, panic did start to flash through her own pelt. If only she had Boragewisp with her! The she-cat only smiled and closed her eyes. Her whole body shuddered and fell limp.

Fuzzstar took a few steps back and stared at the fallen cat. Ashmoss gasped and Riverclaw also seemed troubled. Fuzzstar sighed and dipped her head at the dead cat. "May you rest well." She murmured and pressed her mother into the she-cat's fur. It was bloody and sticky, but Fuzzstar ignored it. With all the warm blood on the she-cat - which was starting to dry - she rested her muzzle gently on her actual body and was terrified to realize that it was already going cold. She looked at her Clanmates and shook her head. "She is already hunting with her ancestors." She said. Riverclaw muttered a curse. "Fox-dung, I thought that we could save her."

"I think that we should bury them." Ashmoss spoke up, looking unsure. Fuzzstar nodded. They quickly dug a hole and gently placed the body into the grave before putting the dirt back on it. Riverclaw ran away and came back with flowers in their jaw and placed the petals on the grave.

Ashmoss looked at Fuzzstar. "Should we tell the rest of the Clan about this?" She asked. Fuzzstar frowned. *Should we? It wouldn't really do too much to us.* She thought. Fuzzstar shook her head. "No, it won't affect the rest of them." She answered. Ashmoss nodded. "We should go back." Riverclaw spoke up. "Okay." Fuzzstar mewed and kinked her tail for the other two to follow her.

They walked back to camp and Fuzzstar prayed that the cat hadn't suffered too much and that they were now in someplace happy. But now Fuzzstar would return back to her own duties and find her happiness back with her own cats.

Chapter 9

Oatpaw couldn't sleep. Today was his assessment after all. How could he sleep? He remembered that Wolfblotch had told him that he had to get some sleep, so he was prepared to, and he tried, he really tried. It was just so hard. Even though he was super excited, he was frightened as well. What if he made a mistake? Or he did something mouse-brain and would be held back?

Dawn light started to shine above Oatpaw pressed his face deeper into his nest, trying to block it out because he had finally managed to block it out. He groaned and put his tail on his closed eyes so the rays couldn't make strange red splotches in the darkness.

"Oatpaw?" Mewed a soft voice.

Oatpaw slowly opened his hazel eyes and a blurry figure of Wolfblotch started to sharpen into his view. "Are you ready for your assessment?" She asked. Oatpaw spring up, his pelt bristling in horror. "Is it right now?" He asked, his breathing becoming unsteady. If it was right then, he felt so unsure, so unprepared. He thought that it would be a little later. And not only that but he felt hungry, and he wouldn't be able to eat during his assessment because Wolfblotch and maybe even *Fuzzstar* would be watching. Pressure that almost felt crushing started to become a large weight onto his shoulders.

Wolfblotch shook her and pressed Oatpaw down, making his sit. She slowly started to groom his pelt, which calmed Oatpaw down. "No, no. I was just asking in general. Are you ready? I didn't mean to frightened you." She explained. Oatpaw steadied his breathing and let out a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Wolfblotch." He murmured. "Also, not really." He mumbled. Wolfblotch studied her apprentice. "No problem." She replied.

Oatpaw looked at the den. Clawpaw was calmly sleeping next to him, her flank rising up and down. He suddenly remembered that Howlkit was six moons old and would also become an apprentice

when he became a warrior. His gaze soon caught onto the fresh-kill pile and his stomach started to rumble in hunger. Wolfblotch's whiskers twitched. "You okay?" She asked jokingly. Oatpaw glanced back up at his mentor. "My stomach thinks that my throat's been torn out." He replied and bounded toward the fresh-kill pile, quickly picking up a mouse. Wolfblotch purred and went to pick up a vole as well.

Oatpaw quickly ate the mouse and when he had finished, he licked his whiskers clean from the prey. As he was grooming, the two kits Honeykit and Howlkit tackled Oatpaw to the ground with excited paws. Well, more like Honeykit had tackled Oatpaw and Howlkit followed. The black tabby tom's polite nature had grown from just being polite and nice to becoming calmer, but still seemed ready to fight. "Oatpaw! Oatpaw!" Honeykit squeaked. "Are you becoming a warrior today?" He asked very rapidly. Oatpaw smiled and shook the kits off his pelt. "No, but I am taking my assessment today." He replied. Honeykit frowned. "An... assessment?" He mewed, obviously confused. "An assessment is what an apprentice must do to prove that they are worthy of their warrior name." Oatpaw explained. Honeykit frowned. "But you're so anxious all the time, are you okay?" He mewed. Oatpaw hesitated, unsure on how to answer that question. "I'm... not sure how to feel honestly." He replied.

Howlkit placed one of his paws on Oatpaw's comfortingly. "Hey, you're going to do a great job." Howkit promised, looking into the ginger cat's eyes. Oatpaw smiled and licked Howlkit gently, thanking him. "Thanks you two." He mewed. Howlkit and Honeykit quickly mewed good-bye before racing back to the nursery.

"Are you ready?" Wolfblotch asked, walking up to him. Oatpaw hesitated and went through a bit of a thought process. *Am I? This test will determine whether or not I become a warrior. Something from legends.* He looked back into Wolfblotch's gray eyes, feeling very comforted by them and new trust started to build in him. "Yes, yes I am." He replied. The black and brown mottled she-cat nodded. "Good, now let's go talk to Fuzzstar."

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Oatpaw walked across the territory, the sun was shining, and the wind gently brushed against his fur, carrying the salty but now very comforting and familiar scent of the sea. It was the best time for an assessment. Or hunting at least. Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar were walking behind Oatpaw, ready to show him what he needed to do during this assessment.

Fuzzstar explained what was going to happen. "There are two parts to this assessment, hunting, and swimming. You will be doing land hunting for even though you have learned to hunt for fish, we still need to learn how to hunt for anything in case something happens." Oatpaw nodded. "So... hunting first?" He asked, just to make sure. Fuzzstar nodded. "Yes." She answered. Oatpaw felt so much better. He was a good at hunting, but he remembered when he was a few moons younger and failed that one time, feeling bitter and angry at himself.

"You shall start... NOW!" Fuzzstar shouted and Oatpaw raced off, scenting for prey. He looked around and opened his jaws to scent for something, anything. Something skittered between some of the bushes, and he checked the air. A mouth-watering scent drifted over, and he easily recognized it as vole. He raised his tail, using his knowledge of where the wind was blowing. He lowered himself to the ground and tried to repeatedly tell himself not to make his tail swish.

He looked at the bush and the outline of the vole was very visible. He was about to pounce, but he hesitated. *What if I miss? Does it smell me? How does the prey not see me? Can I really catch it? What is Wolfblotch thinking? What is* Fuzzstar *thinking?* He wondered. All the swirling thoughts started to cloud his mind.

He was so lost that he didn't even know what the vole was doing until it started to make noise again with rustling the bush's leaves. *It's escaping!* He realized. Not wanting to waste any more time, he lunged for the creature. He felt the warm body and picked it up, feeling it squirm and squeal in terror before he bit down on its spin and felt it go limp.

And while probably should have been proud of his first chance, all he felt was annoyance at himself. He shouldn't have been so

hesitant! It could have gotten away, and right in front of the leader and deputy too. While they might understand that it was just his first catch, it would have been so awkward catching something while he clearly had the right formation. Why was he so mouse-brained and stupid?

Oatpaw tried to shake his insecurities away and quickly dug a hole to place his vole in. *Great, I'm already off to a bad start...* He thought bitterly and continued on.

He had done what he thought was at least acceptable to him personally throughout the rest of the first part. He had managed to catch two mice and thrush after his vole. However, in the process he missed a starling, a water vole, and a shrew as well which didn't make him feel super cheerful.

When he had come back to collect his vole from before, both Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar had come out from the bushes. Wolfblotch was looking at him excitedly while Fuzzstar's expression was much harder to read. Oatpaw didn't know how to feel about that. *Did I do something wrong?* He wondered. However, Fuzzstar soon brightened. "You did really well, Oatpaw. It is obvious that you had grown so much over the past few moons." The brown and white tabby she-cat meowed. Oatpaw felt as though he was as light as a feather, his worries lifted away. He was so scared that with all the prey he had missed, he did bad. But since this was the first ever warrior assessment the Clan had done, he had done well. He felt so much better, but he soon recalled that there was a second part to the assessment: swimming.

Fuzzstar seemed to understand why he was so scared because she meowed, "You did very well so far. Don't be harsh on yourself. You're going to do well." She soon led the other two cats to the shore of the beach, where the waves started to lap at the sand like a stroking mother's tongue on her kit's head.

"Place your fresh-kill over here." Wolfblotch said, pointing at a spot farther away from the shore where the tides wouldn't reach. He gently placed his prey down and walked over to the older she-cats. "What am I going to do now?" He asked.

"Go out into the water, I'll like to see how well you do. I want to see your wade by the shore, your paddle farther out, and your dive underwater." Fuzzstar explained, pointing with her tail at the ocean.

Oatpaw took a deep breath, and walked closer to the water, feeling it splash his paws. Flashbacks of his failed catches returned to his mind, but he shoved them out of the way. He walked into the water, feeling it start to swarm around him, the salty liquid eagerly pulling him into its jaws of the splashing sea. Oatpaw gulped, scared of how happy the ocean seemed. Calming and was acting as though it was glad that Oatpaw was coming toward it. *Just don't put your head under yet.* He told himself. *Don't panic, if you panic you die.*

He soon came to a point where the sand was just barely touching his paws that he started to rise his head into the air so that the water only tickled his chin and his stretched out his forepaws to swim. Luckily, he had a short fur, so it didn't pull him down too much. He stretched out his paws and started to gently throw them into the water, and then pulled it back out with a swing. Using his front paws to steer and his back legs to move around the water, he went further and further away from the beach with Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar mewing happily from the shore.

He started to go farther and farther out and eventually he felt... free. He looked down at the water and through the glaring of the sun's reflection, he could see a blurry sandy floor many, many tail-lengths down. He felt anxious and worried that he was going to drown, but he pushed the panic away. *Don't I have to dive as well?* He realized with a sickening feeling.

He sighed, his legs and paws already tired and sore, but he knew that he had to. It would all be worth when he got his warrior name. He shook his head, ready for his final child. He took in a deep breath and ducked his head below the surface.

Almost immediately, he felt the water start to rush into through his nose, the salty and tangy ocean choked him, and he felt as though he was drowning. Quickly, he started to use some of his air to blow bubbles, blocking the water out which didn't fully work, but it was enough.

Using his paws and legs for steering and moving again, he started to swim around, graceful as an otter. Smiling and proud of himself he swam around widely, practically dancing. It was so beautiful underwater, the sunlight shimmering on the water made a very cool effect on the ground, fish swam around as though they were flying, scales flashing. Even the coral and rock were beautiful and colorful. Oatpaw started to swim closer to the shore, gazing at everything. Whenever he had to breathe, he came back to the surface to gulp more air before coming back down.

When Oatpaw resurfaced at the shore, he looked up at his leader and mentor. His muscles were sore and were screaming for a break. After all, he had started his assessment near the end of dawn, and it was already sun-high. "How... did I... do?" He asked throughout breaths. Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar looked at each other and murmured to each other very quietly. So quietly that Oatpaw couldn't hear. He felt sick. Did they think that he wasn't qualified? Eventually Wolfblotch finished her conversation. "Go get the prey you caught earlier; we're going back to camp." She meowed. Oatpaw's eyes widened. He nodded and quickly rushed back to the area where he had dropped it off and picked them up.

He followed the two other she-cats to camp and placed his prey on the fresh-kill pile. "Can I go to my den and rest?" Oatpaw asked his mentor. Wolfblotch looked at him. "Of course, go ahead." She meowed, nodding toward the apprentice den. Oatpaw easily walked over to the den and collapsed onto his nest. Clawpaw walked over to him. "Hey, how did it go?" She asked. "I don't know." Oatpaw replied. "I just want to sleep..." He mumbled. Clawpaw nodded and out of the den. "By the way, I'm sure that you did great." Clawpaw said to her Clanmate, but Oatpaw didn't hear her. He was already fast asleep.

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Oatpaw had been walking in front of his den, his tail twitching anxiously. It had been about two days since his assessment and Wolfblotch had been very vague about how well he did on the assessment. He just wanted answers now.

His attention soon shifted when he saw that Fuzzstar was climbing

onto HighTree and facing her Clanmates. "Let all cats old enough to pad through the water gather around the HighTree!" She yowled. The Clan soon gathered around, and Oatpaw looked around and saw Howlkit scamper around excitedly. *Oh, this must be his apprentice ceremony.* He realized. He couldn't help but be a bit annoyed. He wished that it was his warrior ceremony, but he was happy for the young black tabby tom.

When everyone was gathered, Fuzzstar beamed with happiness. "As you all know, there are two cats here that have been great cats to this Clan. And I am so glad to say that these cats shall be getting new names!" Fuzzstar looked over at her deputy who was sitting closer to the HighTree's roots. Oatpaw's hazel eyes widened. *Is this really...?*

"Wolfblotch, has your apprentice, Oatpaw, learned the skills of a warrior. Does he understand the importance of the warrior code?" She asked. Oatpaw stared at shock. He looked at his mentor to see how she would react. Wolfblotch nodded as she smiled, her gray eyes shing. "He has." She replied. Fuzzstar nodded and straightened up. "Good. I, Fuzzstar, leader of WetClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down upon this apprentice. He has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn." She looked down at Oatpaw. "Oatpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Oatpaw was gaping in shock and happiness. He'd thought that he had failed his assessment! But no, he was becoming a warrior! *Scratch, Flicker, Wren, are you watching this? Are you proud of me?* He wondered, quickly looking up at the sky before facing Fuzzstar again. "I do."

Fuzzstar smiled and flicked her tail. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Oatpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Oatblur. StarClan honors your vigilance and we welcome you as a full warrior of WetClan." She leaped down from HighTree and rested her muzzle on his forehead. Oatblur responded by licking her shoulder in respect and gratitude.

Wolfblotch yowled happily and the Clan soon followed. Fuzzstar

smiled and climbed back onto HighTree. "I have one more announcement to make. Howlkit, come forward." The cats turned to face the six-moon-old kit who calmly walked over, however, Oatblur noticed that he was slightly trembling from excitement.

"Howlkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Howlpaw. Your mentor will be Riverclaw. I hope that Riverclaw will pass on all they know onto you." The gray and white cat seemed shocked to be chosen as the kit's mentor, but they happily trotted over and pressed their muzzle onto the young tom. The Clan cheered the cats' names.

"Oatblur! Howlpaw! Oatblur! Howlpaw!"

Chapter 10

Boragewisp quietly walked through the territory, looking for tansy. It was super helpful, from healing wounds and getting poison out, to help stop cats from getting greencough. She walked across the territory, getting farther away from the shore and started to walk onto the more brittle grass.

A few days have passed since Oatblur became a warrior and even though he was happy, it seemed as though his insecurity was still with him. Boragewisp soon came upon the yellow flowers by the more softer grass. Their leaves were spiked and prickly, but Boragewisp knew that the petals of the flower were gentler. She cautiously started to pick them, placing them down on the ground. When she had collected a few more, she picked up the bundle and headed back to camp.

When she got back she saw that the Clan was very busy. The annoying - at least to Boragewisp- Honeykit was playing around with Oatblur who seemed to like the young kit. *I can't wait until he's an apprentice. Maybe then he won't get into so much trouble.* She thought. Then sighed. *Never mind, I highly doubt that will happen.* Wolfblotch was organizing patrols and Fuzzstar was quietly grooming on HighTree. Ashmoss was talking to Riverclaw as the two padded off to the warriors' den. It seemed as though the two had made up after the little stunt Riverclaw pulled. Meanwhile Amberbite and Clawpaw were walking toward the exit, but Clawpaw kept looking back at Riverclaw and smirking. Boragewisp just shook her head. That young she-cat was going to do great things, but she kept acting strange sometimes.

Boragewisp took her precious herbs to her quiet den, happy by the soothing darkness that surrounded her. Sometimes she just needed peace and quiet from all the kits that seemed to have been from chaos itself. She padded through the den, feeling the familiar fragrance of plants swarm around her. She gently placed the tansy on one of her shelves before returning back outside.

When she sat down, she relaxed and watched her fellow Clanmates. She enjoyed it, but she couldn't help but feel saddened. She was growing much older, but she knew that Honeykit wouldn't seem fit to be a medicine cat apprentice. She wanted to have a succeeder before she joined Sunnypaw in the stars, but her Clan was still so small. She didn't know how to help them.

As she was watching them, she noticed Honeykit was playing a bit too rough. Honeykit let out a roar and leaped forward, trying to tackle Oatblur to the ground. Oatblur only smiled and darted away. Honeykit soon landed onto the ground a lot more aggressively and let out a small groan. Boragewisp stood up, her eyes wide. *Is he hurt?* She wondered and dashed over to the old kit. Oatblur froze and stared in shock.

Honeykit sat up and let out a few complaints as Boragewisp looked around on Honeykit to check for any wounds or even just a few bruises. However, she did notice some cuts and scrapes. "Honeykit, you shouldn't be playing that roughly." Boragewisp stated harshly. Honeykit didn't flinch. "Oh, I'm sorry Boragewisp. Can I continue playing now?" He asked, staring innocently at her.

Boragewisp stood up, her eyes glaring down at the young kit. "No, let me clean you up first." She snapped. Oatblur cocked his head at her. "He's not terribly injured. Why are you so upset?" He asked. Boragewisp looked back to look at the ginger tom. "I'm annoyed because this little kit is never helpful and is always casing problems for other cats." She answered. Honeykit didn't seemed too effected by it, but he did seem a little hurt.

Oatblur opened his mouth, but soon closed it. "Just don't be so harsh on the *kit*, okay Boragewisp?" He asked. Boragewisp didn't agree. "He's going to be an apprentice next moon you know." She replied and picked up the kit by the neck scruff and carried him back to her den. She quickly started to treat her patient, licking his fur and getting rid of all of the dust and rocks and other things that got stuck in it before cleaning his scrapes. When Boragewisp finished she stood up and looked down at Honeykit. "Okay, you're free to go now." She meowed.

Honeykit looked back at her with a smile on his face. "Yay! Thanks,

Boragewisp!" He cried and bounced away. Boragewisp ruffled her pelt. *Good riddance. I'm getting too old for these little shenanigans.*

She walked back outside and grabbed a sardine from the fresh-kill pile and walked back over to her den to quickly eat. Time passed by and soon she had finished and started to groom, trying to get every whisker in place. After all, the Gathering was coming up very soon and Boragewisp wanted to look okay in front of the others. Especially the other medicine cats, after all, Sloestem could be a thorn in one's side sometimes. *Arrogant furball.* She thought bitterly. Her gaze softened when she stopped and looked back at her Clan. Even though there were still cats that she wasn't terribly fond off, she still liked this Clan. Her home.

Amberbite and Clawpaw soon came back from their patrol and Clawpaw seemed honestly kind of bored. Boragewisp watched as Clawpaw saw Riverclaw and smiled. The nine-moon old apprentice went over to check with the older cat and murmured something to them. Riverclaw seemed happy with the idea and went into the warriors' den. Confused, and also a little concerned on what Clawpaw was up to, Boragewisp went over to talk with the young she-cat. "What was that all about?" She asked. Clawpaw jumped in surprise, not seeming to have noticed Boragewisp walk over to her. "Oh! I was just suggesting that they should go check their nest. Maybe decorate it, rebuild it, fluff it up. Something like that." She explained. Boragewisp soon relaxed after Clawpaw's confession. It seemed legit and honestly not that bad.

That was... until she heard a yowl coming from the warriors' den.

Boragewisp, Amberbite, Oatblur, and Clawpaw all dashed into the den where they saw Riverclaw hiss in pain. Boragewisp walked over to them. "What's wrong?" She asked. Riverclaw looked up at her. "Well, you see, I was fluffing up my nest like Clawpaw suggested, when I, well... let's just say that I was pranked." They answered, showing Boragewisp one of their paws. In it was a thorn stuck in their pad. "Hmmm..." Boragewisp hummed while thinking. *Why would someone put a thorn into Riverclaw's bedding? Especially a thorn this size too!*

Behind her, Clawpaw started to burst out laughing, Oatblur

following her. The older warriors and medicine cat looked at them, confused. "What's so funny?" Boragewisp asked. Clawpaw looked at her. "I put the thorn there when Riverclaw wasn't looking." Before anyone could ask why, Clawpaw immediately added. "For revenge last moon!" Amberbite whipped their gaze to Oatblur. "Did you know about this?" They asked. Oatblur nodded. "I wasn't a part of it, but Clawpaw told me what she was doing after she already snuck the thorn in." Oatblur flinched when Amberbite glared at him. Meanwhile Riverclaw grinned. "You got me good!" They exclaimed as Boragewisp fastened her teeth on the thorn, ready to pull it out.

She soon yanked it out, which caused Riverclaw to yelp in surprise and limped back. Small drops of blood started to leak out, staining the ground. However, the gray and white cat grinned and looked at the young apprentice. "You got me good." They remarked. Clawpaw blinked and stood up straight, her tail started to rise up. "Really?" She mewed happily. Riverclaw trotted over to her, but careful not to use their leg. They gently nuzzled her head-fluff with their muzzle, amused. "Oh of course not! That was quite a stunt. I'm proud." Clawpaw beamed from happiness at the troublesome cat's praise.

Amberbite meanwhile didn't seemed as pleased. "I for one didn't like it." They meowed, lashing their tail left to right. "You pranked another cat, but by *injuring* them? Clanmates don't hurt each other." Amberbite snarled. Riverclaw looked at their denmate. "It was just a joke." They tried to reason the ginger and white warrior. "A bad one." Amberbite hissed. "I'm going to have to tell Fuzzstar about this. With this little prank of yours, you might not be able to go to the next Gathering!" They snapped. Clawpaw froze, her cobalt eyes widening. Oatblur stood in front of his former denmate in defense. "H-hold on now. Sure she did something a little was more for someone to get a thorn, but she's a good apprentice and deserves to be with her friends... from other Clans." He added quickly.

Boragewisp felt her fur tingle. She knew why Oatblur had added that part by the ending. Clawpaw didn't really have that many friends. She was close to Luckpaw from GullClan, but since they were from different Clans, they couldn't speak to each other that much. And Clawpaw wasn't super close to anyone in the Clan.

Amberbite sighed. "I'm still going to tell Fuzzstar about this." They said and walked away. Clawpaw's ears drooped slightly, and she too walked away. Oatblur and Riverclaw glanced at each before racing back to go after her. Boragewisp sighed and followed her Clanmates out of the den. And while she didn't like what Clawpaw did, she hoped for the best for the young she-cat. The medicine cat soon walked back into her den, catching sight of Amberbite talking to Fuzzstar with Clawpaw behind them, ears drooping. Pity for the she-cat started to overwhelm Boragewisp, and she went into her den to find some more peace and quiet.

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"Wake up, sleepyhead!" Mewed Howlpaw, gently nudging Clawpaw who had recently taken a nap during sun-high. She looked up and saw that the sun was slowly going down and she felt grateful for the young tom's wake-up call. To be honest, she did miss Oatblur, but with Howlpaw instantly moving in as well, so she didn't feel too upset. Besides, next moon Honeykit will join them in the apprentice den, and it might start to get a little cramp.

Tonight was the night of the Gathering, and while she had been nervous because she was scared that Fuzzstar wouldn't let in go because of the stunt she did a day ago, her leader had been merciful and agreed to let her come. Along with Ashmoss, Oatblur, Boragewisp, Wolfblotch, Howlpaw, and Amberbite. Riverclaw had said that he would stay and watch over Honeykit.

"Come on, Clawpaw." Howlpaw meowed gently. "Fuzzstar is going to lead us to the Great Willow really soon!" While the black tabby tom was usually a very calm cat, he seemed excited to go to his first Gathering. And Clawpaw didn't blame him, it truly is a wonderful time.

The gray and white smoke she-cat soon got up and followed Howlpaw out of the den and was soon greeted by her mentor who gave her a curt nod. Fuzzstar came out of her den and let out a yowl. *It's time to go!* Clawpaw thought excitedly. As the cats that were going to leave gathered around, Honeykit scampered over to where Howlpaw was. "I'm *sooooo* jealous that you get to go a Gathering!" Honeykit wailed. Howlpaw smiled. "Don't worry, you'll

be an apprentice soon." Howlpaw replied gently. Honeykit slumped, looking unimpressed. "I wish I was one now." He grumbled.

"It's time to go!" Fuzzstar yowled and flicked her tail for her Clanmates to follow. Clawpaw walked close by her mentor feeling a bit insecure and awkward, but occasionally she would look up at the sky, watching the stars twinkle and felt as though she could touch them. When they soon came upon the slope, Clawpaw itched to run up ahead. But she knew better than that. She felt as though she was walking on eggshells with some of these cats, but she didn't know how to prove herself. She was quiet the entire time the cats journeyed to the Great Willow.

Almost immediately after her Clan got to the willow tree, they all disbanded to either go to their special places or went to hang out with their friends from the other Clans. Clawpaw had noticed that it seemed as though all the Clans were here except for WheatClan. Which was strange considering how the slope to the Great Willow was literally on their territory. Clawpaw ignored the strangeness of the delay and trotted over to where the other apprentices were.

Her friend, Luckpaw noticed her almost instantly. "Clawpaw! Come over here and meet the newest apprentices!" She cried. Clawpaw nodded and bounded toward her friend. As she gazed at all of the familiar faces and some of the still familiar from the trip faces, but still new, she thought about how strange it was that Oatblur and Rattlegleam weren't with them. Luckpaw was about to talk to Clawpaw when the WetClan apprentice noticed Howlpaw, who seemed lost.

"Howlpaw! Over here!" Clawpaw invited, waving her paw for him to get his attention. Howlpaw seemed to have noticed and padded over, looking at the other cats shyly. Ridgepaw, the Bubbleclan apprentice, looked around. "Where's Oatpaw?" He asked. "Oatpaw's a warrior now." Clawpaw answered. The apprentices let out their congrats before settling down and introducing one another.

"I'm Siltpaw from GullClan!" A dorsal-striped brown tom with gold eyes meowed to the group. Something about the tom made Clawpaw almost immediately trust him, but Clawpaw didn't think too much about it. Some cats were just like that. "And I'm

Murkpaw." Said a dorsal-striped brown and white tom with cyan eyes. However, green herbs covered the young apprentice's pelt. "I'm Sloestem's apprentice actually." The medicine cat apprentice admitted. "Oh, and one of my Clanmates, Cloudkit, gave me these herbs." He explained. Many cats murmured to each other and Clawpaw pictured the fluffy she-kit giving the new medicine cat herbs in congratulations. "And I'm Howlpaw from WetClan." The black tabby tom mewed finally. With all the introductions out of the way, the apprentices started to chant to one another of how their training was going and all the drama in the Clans.

Eventually, WheatClan cat with an angry Lightstar leading them. Houndpaw cautiously walked over to her friends who greeted her happily. As WheatClan started to sit down, a long-furred dark gray smoke she-cat with sunlit eyes sat down next to her with the more recognizable Clawcurl. And while Clawpaw did see her sometimes during the travel, it was only in glimpses, and she never got to know the she-cat. She had never seen her at any of the Gatherings and concluded that this must be Budtree, the WheatClan cat who had been mangled since the start of the Clans.

And yet... there was something about the stranger that she just couldn't understand. A feeling. Clawpaw felt naturally safe around the WheatClan warrior. She felt comforted. Cared. And not only that... but Budtree's scent seemed so familiar to her. As though she had smelled it for a long time.

"Hello." Clawpaw's greeting was barely a whisper, but it made the smoke-designed she-cat to look at her. "Oh, hello there." Budtree greeted. She cocked her head, her eyes suddenly shining. "Are you Clawpaw? The kittypet that joined us during the journey?" She asked. Clawpaw nodded. "I am." She replied. Budtree nodded, but she didn't look away. Instead, Budtree's eyes were wide with wonder. "I'm sorry. But you look like someone that I used to know." The older she-cat explained. "Oh, I guess that I have one of those faces." Clawpaw mumbled, suddenly feeling very anxious. What did Budtree mean?

[image]

But Budtree shook her head. "No, there's more to it." Her eyes

widened. "What do you remember, nine moons ago?" She questioned. Clawpaw blinked in surprise, not expecting a question like that. "I- I don't-" She stuttered. "Think." Budtree replied, sounding desperate. Clawpaw silenced herself. Concentrating hard, she went back through her memories. She didn't remember much, she was born nine moons ago after all, but she did recall vivid flashes. A meadow that seemed to stretch farther than the eye could soon until there was a glisten of sunlight reflecting off of water. She remembered peace and happiness, suckling to her mother without any siblings by her side. But then she remembered something else. When there was a warm embrace by a she-cat's tongue and soft fur, it was shattered by the cold bare hands of a Twoleg, grabbing her and taking her away. She opened her eyes and looked at Budtree. "I remember a meadow, warmth and love from a mother, and then the coldness of a Twoleg, taking it all away."

Budtree was silent after that. But her eyes soon seemed to lighten up and the older she-cat beamed with happiness. "Clawpaw... you're my daughter."

Chapter 11

Clawpaw felt as though the ground underneath her paws just vanished. "Wha-what?" She stuttered. She couldn't process the idea that her mother was a cat from a different Clan, a former *Keeper* cat to be more specific, when she was a kittypet! Sure, she never knew where she came, or knew who her parents were, or why she always had a sense of adventure. Or even where her 'strange' nature came from. But her mother being Budtree?! It made...

...a lot of sense actually.

Clawpaw looked down at her claws, unaware of her breathing becoming unsteady. Budtree's eyes widened and curled her large tail around Clawpaw. The apprentice. The WetClan cat? Her daughter? Clawpaw wasn't sure anymore.

Budtree reassuringly rested one of her paws on Clawpaw. "Hey, hey. Calm down. Everything's going to be okay." When Clawpaw didn't answer Budtree repeated, "Okay?" Clawpaw eventually sighed and looked up at the WheatClan she-cat. "Alright." She mumbled. Budtree patted Clawpaw gently. "This doesn't change anything." Budtree meowed. "You are still a WetClan cat, you are still Clawpaw. You are yourself. Nothing is going to change that." Budtree said to her. Clawpaw looked up at Budtree, feeling very reassured. But many thoughts started to pop up in her brain and she unable to keep quiet about them. "What happened, nine moons ago?" She asked. "How did I get separated? Did I have siblings? Who's my father?" She asked.

Budtree sighed, clearing unhappy with some of the questions, and maybe their answers as well. "Ten moons ago, the Twolegs had started to get a little bit... well, strange to say the least. They started to bring things to our lovely meadow, and everyone started to get a little suspicious. I was nervous of course. I was expecting kits, and I didn't want them to grow up in a place where Twolegs were acting strange. And to answer your question about your father, I may or may not have had a bit of a fling to say the least with a loner

named Hare. When I had you, and only you, one kit, I felt a surge of love and protection for you. I truly loved you, but the Twolegs started to grow stranger and stranger each day. And with it brought danger. The day was very clear in my mind. Twolegs and their monsters started to invade camp while cats were away. I hissed and spat at them, but they took you." Budtree looked as though she was going to wail all the way to StarClan. "They took my only kit away from me." She sniffed and straightened up. "And I've never seen you since. Until when we started to move. I saw you, a strange little kittypet ready to guide to the ocean. I didn't recognize you then because I only saw glimpses of you and you were often somewhere else, but now I realized that you're my missing kit." She meowed happily and licked her between the ears.

Clawpaw felt so happy to find family. Many cats in her Clan had family, even if most where already gone. But now she felt connected and true. Though something did make her feel angry. "Why didn't you go after me?" She asked. Budtree blinked in surprise. "I did. I truly did want to search for you. But the Twolegs were destroying my home and so many of my kin and friends started to die or get captured. It was life or death out there and if I went anywhere near those Twolegs, I would be walking with the stars right now." Clawpaw was silent. The older she-cat made a good point. Budtree purred. "I'm just so happy now that you're alive." She purred and rested her head on Clawpaw's head.

Clawpaw embraced her and was happy to see Budtree. However, Budtree soon stopped her licking, and a conflicted expression soon crossed her face. "However, I don't think that we should tell this to anyone." She said, pain slicing through it. Clawpaw blinked. "Why not?" She asked. Budtree pinned her ears. "Well, you see, Lightstar is a fearsome cat. Someone not to reckon with. And with some of these cats in general," Clawpaw followed her mother's gaze to Lightstar, to Wisptail, Owlmuzzle, Amberbite, Sneezewhisker, Rattlegleam, and a few other cats. "I just think that some will be skeptical while others won't take it too well." Clawpaw understood what her mother was talking about and nodded. "Alright, I won't tell anyone." The young apprentice promised. Budtree smiled and nuzzle her one last time. "I'm so glad that I finally reunited with my daughter." She meowed before inching away from Clawpaw and

closer to her mate, Clawcurl.

Clawpaw felt sadden by her mother walking away, but her attention soon was taken by the other apprentices as they called her over. "What was that all about?" Luckpaw asked. "Oh, nothing too important." Clawpaw lied. Luckpaw seemed a bit skeptical about it, but her worried expression soon changed. "Well, that's good because the leaders are about to make their speeches!" She exclaimed happily. Clawpaw nodded and turned her focus onto the four leaders on the Great Willow.

"WheatClan is doing very well!" Lightstar exclaimed, starting the Gathering. When the rest of the other Clans gave him odd looks Lightstar awkwardly shuffled his paws. "We were a bit late because Snowkit went missing. He was just outside of camp." Lightstar explained. He ruffled his pelt. "Anyway, I am happy to report that both Heavyshriek and Budtree are much better." The cats murmured to each other, and some cats mewed warmly at Budtree. Lightstar smiled, clearly happy that he didn't lose any cats. He nodded toward Fiercestar.

Fiercestar padded forward, her eyes shining with happiness and pride. "I first off what to explain that why Thistlefleck isn't here currently is because he got a sprain from a strange Twoleg contraption. So, I warn you all to be wary of them." Fiercestar mewed, nodding toward the leaders who seemed to take in the information with gratitude. Fiercestar looked back at the cats. "But I'm not too worried because we have our first medicine cat apprentice! Please welcome Murkpaw!" She exclaimed.

"Murkpaw! Murkpaw!" The Clans cheered the new apprentice's name. The BubbleClan cat didn't seemed to falter and puffed out his chest in pride.

Fiercestar flicked her tail for silence. "And with that I would also like to announce that Flowerchomp has moved to the nursery for her kits. They are due to be born in about a moon, and we got word from Sloestem that it's going to be a large litter! I couldn't be prouder of my Clan." Fiercestar announced and the Clans cheered happily. Clawpaw's cobalt eyes were shining. There were going to be newborn kits in the Clan, even before the Clans were six moons

old! It was incredible. They really are going to survive.

Fiercestar nodded to Fuzzstar who walked up. Clawpaw noticed Oatblur stiffen when his leader came up next. "First off, I would like to say that we welcome one new warrior and one new apprentice! Please cheer for the newly named Howlpaw and Oatblur!" She yowled. As the Clan cats yowled their names to the sky, Howlpaw stood calmly where he was, not trying to show of or hide himself. All he did was sit calmly where he was. Meanwhile Oatblur was licking his chest fur in embarrassment and seemed to shrink from all the cats shouting. Fuzzstar waited for silence. "And while I have nothing else super major to report, I would like to point out that next moon we will have yet another apprentice." She called before letting the last leader, Petuniastar, take the show.

"First off, I'm glad to say that Rattlegleam has healed from his stomachache and now has an apprentice of his own, Siltpaw!" She soon paused and glanced at Fuzzstar. "One of our patrols found a small dog and while we chased it off, I think it was the same one that you found two moons ago." She meowed to Fuzzstar who seemed shocked the dog came back. Clawpaw shuddered, not wanting to think what would happen if she had to face a dog solo.

Lightstar flicked his tail. "Well, if that's all then I would like to head back to our camps." He yawned. "After all, we need to get a good-nights sleep. And I would like to have a word with that little kit." He added, a lot quieter than the rest of his words but still hearable. Clawpaw pitied the young Snowkit, not wanting to deal with Lightstar's wrath. But as the Gathering came to an end, Clawpaw wandered over to the rest of her Clanmates to go home. She cast one longing glance at Budtree who looked back at her lovingly. "Good-bye." Clawpaw mouthed before dashing off to go follow her Clanmates home.

Chapter 12

Honeykit squeaked in annoyance as Amberbite licked him, trying to smooth his fur. "Amberbite!" Honeykit snapped. "Can you stop?" He hissed. Amberbite only rolled their eyes. "Honeykit, this your apprentice ceremony. Do you want to look like a bunch of brambles?" They snapped. Honeykit didn't respond and sighed, sitting down. It had been a while since the Gathering, and Honeykit had been itching to become an apprentice. It had been soooooo boring being alone in the nursery, even if it was for just a moon. Besides, he wanted to hang out with his friend Howlpaw again. Not only that, but Clawpaw had been acting a bit differently than normal, even though some could argue that she was the weirdest cat ever. But she seemed so... happy after the Gathering. Sure, she had always been a cheerful one, but she acted and moved with more pride in her steps and her eyes gleamed with excitement.

Amberbite sighed as Honeykit continued to squirm a bit more. "Can you please just stop?" They asked. When Honeykit didn't reply, Amberbite responded by saying, "Do you want to look to look bad in front of Howlpaw?" They asked. Honeykit stopped and whirled around to face Amberbite. "W-what do you mean?" He stuttered. Amberbite sighed. "Do you think that I don't notice the way that you two look at each other?" They asked. Honeykit's fur fluffed up. "We were practically raised together, of course we're going to have a bond." Honeykit mewed, frowning. *What does Amberbite mean?* He wondered. Amberbite shook their head. "You'll understand one day." They murmured softly, making Honeykit feel a lot more insecure. Seriously, what was he talking about?

Amberbite continued to groom the young ginger tom a little more before Fuzzstar climbed onto HighTree to call a Clan meeting. "Let all cats old enough to pad through the water gather around the HighTree for a Clan meeting!" She called out. Even though most of the Clan was already out grooming, the rest soon gathered around. Honeykit could hear the whispers and happy murmurs floating through the air and he puffed out his chest, well-aware of what this

meeting was about.

Fuzzstar smiled at her Clan. "Today marks a special day for WetClan, for the final kit in this Clan is ready to become an apprentice." Honeykit strutted over, his head and tail held high in the air. Some Clan members purred in amusement at the young cat's posture. Fuzzstar laughed softly. "Honeykit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Honeypaw. Your mentor will be Wolfblotch. I hope that she passes all that she knows onto you." Honeypaw blinked in shock and happiness. Wolfblotch, the Clan *deputy* was going to mentor him! He couldn't believe it.

He watched as Fuzzstar looked at her deputy. "Wolfblotch, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown to be loyal and kind and did an excellent job with mentoring Oatblur. You will be the mentor of Honeypaw and I expect you to pass all you know onto him." Honeypaw was looking at Wolfblotch with excitement as she pressed her muzzle to his, swinging his tail from left to right. He just got one of the greatest cats in the world to be his mentor! Though he hoped that she would be an awesome mentor and wouldn't assign him any boring tasks. *Anything but moss gathering or tick duty.* He thought, wrinkling his nose just at the thought of it. However, his sour mood soon changed when he heard the Clan start to cheer his name in celebration.

"Honeypaw! Honeypaw!" The Clan chanted and Honeypaw could hear his best friend Howlpaw's voice being the loudest. His didn't know why, but his heart fluttered when he realized that it was Howlpaw. Honeypaw blinked in surprise. After all, that was just because of their friendship. Right? *Maybe I'm going crazy.* He thought before glancing at Amberbite who was giving him an 'I-told-you-so-look' to him. *Is Amberbite right and there's someone more going on?* He wondered. He sighed. *I should probably not think about it too much.* He soon decided.

Honeypaw looked up at Wolfblotch, his eyes wide with excitement. "Soooo what are we going to be doing?" He asked, bouncing around enthused. Wolfblotch smiled. "It's going to be a surprise." She replied. Honeypaw's eagerness only grew. "Are we going outside of

camp and shredding foxes?" He guessed. Wolfblotch purred. "Well, we *are* going out of camp. But I don't think that we should be shredding foxes yet." She replied. While Honeypaw was mild disappointed that he couldn't see a fox, it soon vanished at the thought of leaving camp. It excited him. After all, he had been on the journey to the ocean. He had seen so much and then was crammed into camp for four whole moons!

As Wolfblotch led Honeypaw into the territory, Honeypaw gazed around the area in wonder. He had only been a two moon kit when he first was in the outside world, so his mind was a little fuzzy. In fact, he didn't remember a whole lot about the Keepers. He just remembered a lot of cats, the grass getting gently brushed by the wind, his mother's warmth, and his sister Bumble asking him to play. But that was it.

So as he gazed around the territory, his eyes were wide and stared at everything in wonder. He looked at the shore and the vast ocean that seemed to stretch forever. "Woah. Are we swimming? Fishing?" He asked. Wolfblotch padded over to him with a friendly smile on her face. "No, but I am happy with your enthusiasm." She replied. She kinked her tail for him to continue follow her and rushed over to his new mentor.

Honeypaw followed his mentor, his excitement turning into curiosity. He wondered what Wolfblotch was planning on the two of them doing that day. Wolfblotch soon walked toward an area on their territory that had had some trees clumped together, making the perfect shady spot. Green moss and lichen grew on some of the trees and Honeypaw could taste bird on the air.

A sickening feeling soon dropped into his stomach as he watched his mentor walked over to a tree that was covered in moss. He groaned. "I'm not going to have to collect *moss* of all things, am I?" He groaned, padding over to her. Wolfblotch only purred. "To you, unfortunately yes. However," She looked at the moss. "Collect moss is much harder than it seems." Honeypaw rolled his eyes. How hard could it be? "Don't you just, like, rip it off the tree?" He mewed.

Wolfblotch's whiskers twitched. "That's some of it. You have to make sure that your claws don't scratch or ruin the moss, or even

break by accidentally scratching the tree. And you have to make sure that no little bugs or splinters get stuck in it as well." Wolfblotch explained. Honeypaw groaned again, trying to zone-out so he didn't have to listen to such a boring lesson. But he liked Wolfblotch a lot, so he paid attention. Even though he really didn't want to.

Wolfblotch flicked her tail at some of the moss growing on the trees. "Why don't I show you how it's done?" She mewed and walked over, unsheathing her claws. She gently put her claws on the top of the moss, slowly and steadily pulling it off. Honeypaw groaned. This was so boring! Why couldn't they have done battle training or hunting? When Wolfblotch was done, Honeypaw noticed that there were no bits of wood, bugs, or anything stuck to it. "Alright, your turn." She said. Honeypaw padded over to the closest tree and unsheathed his claws. He quickly gripped onto the moss, feeling its soft texture, and ripped it off the tree. It came out scraped and not very clean, falling to the ground like tufts of fur. He continued pulling the moss off and kept destroying it during the process, nearly getting his claw stuck in the tree bark. Wolfblotch gently placed one of her paws on her apprentice. "Concentrate." She meowed. Honeypaw sighed and tried again with another tree. But it seemed no matter what he did, he just failed. He hadn't realized that the moss was so hard to get.

He walked over to his mentor, his head hanging low. Wolfblotch sighed and picked up the moss she had collected earlier. "I was hoping that you would manage to get some moss to build your nest, but you can use mine." She meowed. *Oh, that's why we went moss-collecting. She was trying to get supplies for my new nest.* He thought. And with that realization, he felt ten times worse. Wolfblotch rested her tail soothingly on his back. "Hey, it's okay. No one gets everything perfect on the first try." She tried to reason. "I guess." He replied back, feeling sour. "Can we just go back to camp now?" He muttered. Wolfblotch hesitated, but soon nodded. "Alright, let's head back." She meowed before leading the way back home.

When they arrived Wolfblotch looked at Honeypaw. "I'm going to drop this off, okay?" She asked. Honeypaw nodded. "Alright, thank you." He replied. Wolfblotch nodded. "Go hang out with Howlpaw."

She suggested before bouncing off to the apprentice den.

Honeypaw just noticed that the black tabby tom was quietly eating a smaller eagle that looked close to being an adult near the apprentice den. Howlpaw caught sight of Honeypaw and waved his paws at him, indicating that he wanted Honeypaw to join him. Honeypaw awkwardly walked over to him, feeling his pelt burn along the way. "Care to share this with me?" Howlpaw asked. Honeypaw nodded and laid down close to him.

Howlpaw smiled. "How does being an apprentice feel?" He asked. Honeypaw was quiet. "Well, it's exciting now that I can finally go outside of camp and hunt and fight." He admitted. Howlpaw nodded. "Yeah, nothing's better than feeling the wind in your fur, the water splashing your paws, and smelling freedom." He agreed. Howlpaw was quiet for a moment. "So, what was your first patrol like?" He asked. Honeypaw hesitated, not knowing how to respond. "Wellllllll...." He mumbled. "Wolfblotch and I went to get some moss, but it didn't go the greatest." He meowed. Howlpaw looked at him sympathetically. "Hey, not everything is going to be perfect the first time." He meowed. Honeypaw shuffled his paws. "That's what Wolfblotch said." He responded. Howlpaw didn't hesitate to reply. "She's a good mentor you know. Wise. Smart. Kind." He said. Honeypaw nodded. He agreed with Howlpaw, he really did! He just didn't like that they had to do something so boring! He stopped and looked at Howlpaw. "What was your first day as an apprentice like?" He asked. Howlpaw paused to think for a few moments. "I guess I was scared. But I knew that a mentor like Riverclaw will pull me out my shell." He said. Honeypaw purred. "What shell? You're so kind and calm, any cat would love to talk to you. And you would talk back." He said. Howlpaw blinked, seemingly not expecting Honeypaw's words.

Honeypaw thought about how his day went. "But what did you do with Riverclaw?" He asked. "We worked on teamwork, trying to build confidence in each other." Howlpaw answered. Honeypaw cocked his head. "Did it work?" He asked. Howlpaw nodded. "It did. I like Riverclaw. They're a good mentor." He answered. Honeypaw thought about his mentor too, and was soon happy about Fuzzstar's choice.

They both continued talking, after all, they were friends for moons and when Howlpaw became an apprentice with Honeypaw, he was heartbroken. Because his friend was in the apprentice den of course. Right? When they finished the bird, Howlpaw nudged some of the feathers he had been saving to Honeypaw. "Here, use these to make your nest." Howlpaw said. Honeypaw, feeling flattered and thankful of Howlpaw's generosity, took the feathers. As the day soon started to turn dark, Howlpaw offered to help Honeypaw with making his nest. Honeypaw accepted and they quickly made it.

As the day turned into dusk, the Clan started to retreat to their dens. Honeypaw padded to his nest, seeing the much older Clawpaw and his friend Howlpaw come with him. As Honeypaw curled around into his nest, he looked at Howlpaw again. *I hope that I can spend the entire day with him tomorrow.* He thought, wanting to spend more time with his friend again. And with that, he gave a thanks to StarClan for his Clan, his mentor, and Howlpaw before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter 13

Boragewisp quietly returned back to camp which was buzzing with energy. Ever since Honeypaw had been made an apprentice, he had been chaotic, pulling pranks with Riverclaw who seemingly kept blaming the apprentices every time. No one believed them though.

Even though she really did not like the new apprentice, she had to admit that his antics were sometimes happy. And she couldn't help but notice the way Honeypaw and Howlpaw looked at each other sometimes. Then again, it seemed like the Clan all knew.

Boragewisp walked to her den, carrying some goldenrod. The elderly she-cat walked into her peaceful home and gently placed the goldenrod to her stores. She looked at her storages, feeling a bit content with the amount of herbs she had. After organizing some the herbs, she flicked her tail and padded outside.

As Boragewisp looked up at the sky, she soon realized that tonight would be the half-moon meeting. Excitement prickled her fur. She would like to see the other medicine cats, it felt like a long time since she last saw them. Farther away, near the HighTree, she saw Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar... arguing? Boragewisp cocked her head. When Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar soon disbanded, Boragewisp walked over to Fuzzstar. "What was that all about?" The usually spotted pale and white she-cat asked.

Fuzzstar sighed. "It... it was nothing big. Just a small argument." The WetClan leader replied, flicking her tail and glanced at Boragewisp. "Nothing important." She said. The medicine cat cocked her head, not fully sure that Fuzzstar was being honest. "Are you... sure?" She asked. Her eyes scanned the brown tabby for anything that could give away her argument, but she shows nothing. Fuzzstar nodded. "I'm fine." She meowed again and walked away.

"Ashmoss! Oatblur! We're going on a patrol." She called to the other two cats who perked up when their names were called. The patrol

of three soon left with Boragewisp watching. Boragewisp sighs and padded back to her den.

Not too later, Riverclaw walked into the den, their eyes shined with amusement. "Boragewisp, you wouldn't believe what happened to me again!" They announced. Boragewisp looked at the gray and white cat. "Oh? What happened?" She asked. Riverclaw paused, staring off into space with their whiskers twitching in amusement. They shook their head and faced Boragewisp. "Okay, okay. So, I was cleaning my nest like usual, right?" They paused for Boragewisp to nod. Riverclaw was always cleaning their nest, and the Clan seemed to really like to decorate it or something. She wasn't super interested in it. "Well," Riverclaw continued. "I was fluffing up my nest when I saw *another thorn!* It was obviously a prank, but wow, these apprentices are amazing." They laughed.

Two thorn pranks in a row? Boragewisp thought, shaking her head and rolling her eyes. Riverclaw grinned. "And which apprentice does it seem to have gotten some of the greatest charm in the world?" They asked. Boragewisp sighed, understanding what the WetClan warrior was hinting at. "Was it Honeypaw?" She groaned. She really, *really* did not like the new apprentice and thought that he was really annoying and immature. But she knew that she probably shouldn't be so hard on him. He is currently a newly made apprentice after all.

She looked back at Riverclaw. "So, what did you do?" She asked. It was their turn to roll their eyes. "I announced that it was their fault, hello, have you met me before?" Boragewisp sighed, shaking her head. "Riverclaw..." She groaned. "You really need to stop doing that." She scolded them. Riverclaw frowned. "Ugh, Boragewispppppp. Why are you chastising me?" They cried. Boragewisp blinked. "I'm not chastising-" She started but Riverclaw walked away, their head held up high dramatically. Boragewisp rolled her eyes again and went back to her herb store to find some traveling herbs.

A little later, the sun was starting to set, casting a glow that radiated red like blood. The sky started to dance with colors, yellow, orange, purple, pink, and even still some blue. It was a beautiful sight, but the medicine cat knew that she should be going. Already, she had been to many half-moon meetings as the moons

have passed. She looked at some of the apprentices were heading back to their dens, Clawpaw swishing her tail with anxiety. Boragewisp cocked her head, wondering if something was wrong. She sighed and decided that the other Clans would have to wait for a bit. *It won't take long.* She promised as she walked over to the smoke gray and white she-cat.

"Is something wrong?" She asked. Clawpaw jumped when she heard Boragewisp and quickly turned around. "Oh! Boragewisp!" She exclaimed when she saw her. She paused and awkwardly shuffled the ground, playing with some of the sand beneath their paws. "Is something wrong?" Boragewisp asked, cocking her head at the young she-cat. Clawpaw looked up at her with wide eyes. "No! No-nothing at all." She mewed, a little too quickly. Boragewisp sighed. *I've been sighing a lot today.* She thought. "Are you sure?" She asked. Clawpaw lowered her head to the ground in same. "Well... you see..." She seemed to be pushing the problem away. She raised her head up at Boragewisp. "I feel like I'm falling behind on my training." She admitted. Boragewisp blinked. "Oh?" She meowed, wrapping her tail around the apprentice. "Yeah. I can't put a claw why, but I feel like I'm falling behind on my training. Amberbite seems worried about it. But I'm trying really hard!" She explained.

Boragewisp frowned. She was a medicine cat, known to help all of those who were in pain or danger. Physically, and also mentally. But right now, she didn't know how to help. She sat down. "Did you tell Amberbite about this?" She asked. Clawpaw shook her head. "No, they don't know." She replied. "Well, I think that's a great place to start." She answered. Clawpaw was quiet for a moment before nodding. "Thanks, Boragewisp." She murmured before bouncing away to the apprentice den. Boragewisp dipped her head back. "You're welcome, Clawpaw." She responded, aware that the she-cat was already in her den. *May StarClan light your path and grant you good dreams tonight.* She thought.

She frowned when she realized that the sun was already started to sink underneath the waves, giving them one last fiery glow as the moon started to rise with its soft beams of light. The once colorful sky started to turn black with stars twinkling instead. *The meeting!* She thought and raced to her den, quickly eating the traveling herbs

and ignoring the disgusting taste. When she done, she dashed out of the camp, leaving Ashmoss who was guarding the camp a little stunned.

I'm going to be late! She thought, the older she-cat running through her territory. The moon was already climbing up close to becoming moon-high. As she ran through the territory, she soon came across a large cave. Standing near it where the silhouettes of other cats. "I'm here!" She cried, stopping in front of the cave.

One of the medicine cats, a golden tabby and white tom, was the first to notice her. "Oh! Boragewisp, there you are." Heavyshriek from WheatClan cried. A long-furred, dorsal striped black and white tom replied with, "We were just about to start the meeting without you." His cobalt eyes narrowing. His apprentice, Murkpaw, nodded, which explained what Sloestem was saying was true. "Well now she's here, so we will start all together." A black, ginger, and white tortoiseshell said, stepping between Heavyshriek and Sloestem.

As the medicine cats headed into the cave, Boragewisp went over to talk to Sloestem. "So, how is Flowerchomp? Did she have her kits yet?" She asked. Sloestem nodded. "Yep! Five healthy kits. Two she-kits and three toms." He answered. Murkpaw bounded over to them. "And they're really cute. Their names are Leapkit, Redkit, and Silverkit for the toms. For the she-kits they were named Vinekit and Cougarkit." The young apprentice announced. Boragewisp purred. "I'm so happy for her. Tell her that Boragewisp says congratulations." She said to the BubbleClan tom. Sloestem nodded. "I will." He seemed hesitant though with something.

Boragewisp cocked her head. "What's wrong?" She asked. Sloestem sighed. "Well..." As they walked through the tunnel at the end of the line, Sloestem looked down at his paws. "Well, last moon Sporeleap told me that she thought that she was a part of some 'prophecy' because she said that she had a strange dream. I didn't think too much about it, and thought it was just a normal dream that she was overreacting about. But on that same moon, Fluffglide went to talk to me, and soon later Heavyshriek because of some concerns that she had." Sloestem paused. "And right before you showed up, Heavyshriek was telling us about this vision he had while collecting herbs, a small pool of water that had ripples that grew bigger and

bigger each second and washed some leaves from the gorund away." He explained.

Boragewisp stared at the BubbleClan warrior in shock. Since when had this been happening? The beginning of the Clans? "Why didn't you tell me?" She asked, her fur fluffing up in irritation. Sloestem looked down at his paws.

"Your Clan was doing so well, that we didn't think that you needed to know about this." He replied.

"I'm still a medicine cat! My job is to protect and heal *all* cats. Not just my own Clan. And not telling me these secrets about StarClan, what I have devoted the rest of my life to, takes that ability away." She snapped back.

"No! I never even said that. You can still care for your Clan. I don't know what your thinking right now, Boragewisp, but no one is saying that you can't be a medicine cat." Sloestem narrowed his eyes. "Is your age finally starting to mess with you?"

"What? Why are you going off-topic, when this is an important matter!"

"And why are you so angry about it?"

Boragewisp lashed her tail. "You were keeping secrets that I should be allowed to know, away from me!" She exclaimed. Sloestem sighed. "This is why we were silent. We just waited to deal with these on our own, not let another Clan take ahold of something that isn't their own problem. We didn't want you to get all riled up."

"Well, too late, I'm riled up now."

Sloestem sighed. "I can see that." He replied before padding over to the other medicine cats. Boragewisp felt her fur tingle. *Why are they keeping important information like that away from me? I should be allowed to know this, I'm a medicine cat too! I'm not bound to the warrior code. I can help others outside of my own Clan!"* She thought, her fur flicking with irritation.

They soon came upon the tunnel that held the Rushing River, and

the stream splashed onto the rocks which made Boragewisp think of the calming ocean that lapped onto the sedimentary sand. It surprised her, how she had grown so used to the ocean already. She had once been a cat of the land, running across the meadows and fields to catch mice and collect herbs, now she also saw a home in the water, swimming through its currents as though she was flying.

The light of the moon which shone through a small hole up above reflected onto the river which made it glow a soft blue. The ripples illuminated the rocks over the cats, making the cave dance with light and shadows. A small pebble that was soaked with the Rushing River's water glowed like the moon itself.

The medicine cats soon took a turn, pressing their noses against the smooth and cold surface of the pebble and soon fell into a slumber. As Boragewisp closed her eyes, she felt the cold stone floor grab her, however, the cold soon turned to warmth. Boragewisp thought that she was floating on clouds until she opened her eyes to see instead of the cave that she had came in, a starry field. She looked around until she saw a familiar pelt.

"Sunnypaw!" She exclaimed and raced over to the greet the cat who had once trained under her but had passed away when she had caught a mysterious illness. Boragewisp shuddered, remembering very clearly the terror she felt when she had first noticed the young she-cat had started to cough up blood. Soon later she had become extremely weak, and nothing was working. Boragewisp had felt so much shame in herself when she had finally acknowledged that there was nothing that she could do. The image of Boragewisp walking into the den and seeing the she-cat's body limp and cold still haunted her. The healers had decided to call it 'redcough' after the healer-in-training had died.

Sunnypaw looked up at her, her eyes looking as healthy as they had ever been before the illness had taken a hold of her. Her pelt was sleek and smooth, radiating with starlight. Sunnypaw sat down and looked at Boragewisp. She placed one of her paws down, indicating that she wanted her to sit next to the StarClan cat. Boragewisp nodded and walked over to her former apprentice. It hurt to think about Sunnypaw, but she ignored the pain. At least for now. She had a job to do, to greet StarClan and receive their messages to pass

onto her leader. But she wanted answers.

"Sunnypaw," She started quietly. "Why is StarClan sending messages to the other Clans but not WetClan?" She asked. Boragewisp looked at Sunnypaw who had not spoken the entire time. Eventually she looked back up at her. "Because you don't need any messages." She answered. Boragewisp blinked in confusion. *What?* "I-" She started but didn't know what to say. Boragewisp took in a deep breath before finding her words. "But you keep sending the other medicine cats messages. Wouldn't that affect WetClan as well?" She asked, wanting some clarification from Sunnypaw.

Sunnypaw shook her head. "No, in fact, StarClan wasn't talking to the other Clans. Well, except for one." She replied.

Boragewisp frowned. "Huh? What are you talking about?" She asked.

Sunnypaw sighed. "Boragewisp, listen. With the whole 'prophecy' thing with Sporeleap, it was just a normal dream. All cats think that they want to be special, especially if they are in a higher rank." She explained. "Fluffglide was only traveling to the other medicine cats because she was doubting herself with medicine and needed more herbs."

Boragewisp let that information sink in. For a moment, she wanted to shout out that Sloestem had told her that the reason why Fluffglide had traveled to the other Clans was because she had concerns, but as she recalled the conversation she had with the BubbleClan cat, she realized that he never said *what* concerns she had.

"Wait- what about Heavyshriek?" She asked. "He had a vision. You must have sent him something." She said.

"We did, but it wasn't the much of a warning, more of a reminder. A reminder that while the rest of the Clans were growing, they were still as small as ever. It has been four moons since the Clans started and yet they are going nowhere. The message though did have a small warning, that if they don't find cats soon, they could die out."

Boragewisp shuddered. She thought about how her Clan was one of the biggest, but they still haven't had any new recruits. Wouldn't that also affect them? Sunny seemed to have notice her worry. "Remember, it was just a reminder. The Clans have proved to be strong, and I'm not scared that they will die." She smiled. "After all, they have great leaders."

Boragewisp nodded and soon she realized that the sky in Silverpelt was growing little, but only barely which said that dawn was nearing. Sunnypaw looked at Boragewisp. "Until next time, Boragewisp." She replied before Boragewisp's vision started to blur.

Boragewisp blinked open her eyes and realized that she was back in the cave. She looked around and noticed that the other medicine cats around her were also starting to wake up. She patiently waited until everyone was up. "Well, time to go back to our Clans." Fluffglide murmured after doing a quick stretch. Murkpaw yawned but nodded in agreement.

The medicine cats soon left the cave and said their good-byes before going back to their respective Clans. But as Boragewisp padded through her territory, she noticed a small borage petal glistening in the sunny light. She nodded and looked up at the sky, aware that StarClan was watching her.

Chapter 14

Clawpaw walked over to the fresh-kill pile and after getting a fish she quietly sat down to eat. Her mouth watered as she bit into the scaly animal and was soon ravenously eating it. She had earlier had a fight with Honeypaw about something trivial, and she was a little agitated. But eating or swimming would sometimes calm her down.

When she had finished the fish, she got up and looked in camp. The stony walls that hid the clearing, the sand that brushed underneath her paws, and the ocean that splashed onto the shore.

Her eyes soon stopped and focused on the tidepools. She looked around, trying to make sure that no one was checking on her when she quietly splashed into the tidepool. After taking a large breath, she went under. The water brushed through her fur, and she felt the seaweed brush her fur, she wiggled her paws and kicked behind her, and that's when she realized how low and shallow the tidepool was. The sand was starting to brush and get stuck on her belly fur. Feeling crowded by all the rocks, coral, and seaweed, she was about to come back to the surface when she was tugged out of the water by the scruff.

She was pulled out of the water and landed onto the sandy floor, soaking wet from swimming in the tidepools. She looked up to see her mentor, Amberbite, glaring at her. "What in the name of StarClan were you doing?" They snapped.

Clawpaw looked down at her paws. "I was just trying to find another way out of camp." She said, looking back at her mentor.

Amberbite blinked in confusion. "Why did you think that you could escape camp by using the tidepools?" Before Clawpaw could answer they just shook their head. "You know what- I don't- I don't really care."

Clawpaw waited for them to continue. When they didn't, she asked, "What are we doing today?" Amberbite only flicked their tail. "Don't

worry too much about it right now." They paused. "I guess that you could go talk to the other warriors. So you don't accidentally hurt yourself or something." They muttered before walking over to Riverclaw who was talking to his apprentice.

Clawpaw sighed and went over to the shore, watching as the ocean shimmered from the sun. Since it was greenleaf, it felt very refreshing to cool off from the sun by swimming in the calming ocean. Though Oatblur kept fretting that a cat was going to get drifted off to sea. Though the Clan just told him to shut up so he didn't give the apprentices nightmares.

She sighed, resting her tail on her paws and looked back at the other two apprentices who were sharing prey. "Howlpaw! Honeypaw!" Their mentors shouted, calling them over. The two apprentices stopped and quickly finished and rushed over to their mentors. Clawpaw's whiskers twitched as she saw Honeypaw grab another mouse.

"Clawpaw!" The gray apprentice whirled around to see her mentor, who flicked their tail. "Come on." Clawpaw nodded and followed her mentor out of camp. They soon came upon the training clearing where the apprentices would normally practice their stalking and fighting skills. Amberbite waited for Clawpaw to hurry up. "Today we will practice our fighting techniques." They explained.

Clawpaw nodded and lowered herself to ground in her battle stance. Clawpaw felt growing anxiety start to build up at the thought of unsheathed claws. She didn't want to hurt her mentor. Clawpaw and Amberbite started to circle each other, with narrow eyes. Amberbite studied her anxiety and used it. They leaped and pinned her onto the ground.

With a loud 'oof', she thumped to the sandy ground, feeling the sand scrape and scratch her back as she landed hard. Clawpaw hissed at her mentor and kicked them off by using her back legs to kick their underbelly, careful not to scratch them. Amberbite hissed and swiped at Clawpaw who jumped out of the way and charged for their shoulder.

Amberbite rolled their eyes and dodged the attack, leaping for

Clawpaw. Biting down on her fur but not touching the skin, they pulled them down to the ground. Clawpaw growled as Amberbite towered over her yet again, pressing her down. "You got to make sure that your moves aren't so obvious. Your enemy could see you coming and what you're planning in an instant." They said. Clawpaw grumbled as a response.

She looked at one of their paws that wasn't pinning her down and grabbed it. Yanking it to the floor and lifting her up, she whirled around and pinned them down instead. "Oh, how the tables have turned." She mewed with a smirk.

Amberbite blinked. "What's a table?" They asked.

Clawpaw sighed, deciding that it would only make them even more confused if she tried to explain the Twoleg object. "It's something that Twolegs use." Was all she said. Amberbite seemed satisfied with that answer though. Clawpaw was proud though with herself as she teasingly flicked her tail on his mentor's nose to indicate that she one. Amberbite rolled their eyes, but a small smile shined through. "Good job. Now can you get off me?" They asked, and Clawpaw leaped off of them. Amberbite got up and looked at their apprentice. "What do you want to do? We have some extra time after all."

Clawpaw thought for a moment, when an idea popped up. "Why don't we go patrol the border? After all, we got to see what the other Clans are up to-" She stated when she was cut off.

"You want to go see Luckpaw, don't you?" They asked in flat voice, staring at her with a bored expression.

Clawpaw shuffled awkwardly. "Uh, yeah. Yeah, I do." She admitted.

Amberbite sighed and rolled their eyes. "Alright, let's go by the border." Clawpaw perked up. "Really?" She asked. Amberbite nodded. "Of course. While you still have to be loyal to your Clan, I don't see any reason why you can't have friends with different Clans." Clawpaw felt a lot more relieved. She was glad that her mentor was Amberbite, and that they understood her.

"Though, I believe that we should go border another Clan's border just so we don't seem too suspicious." They said with a wink. Clawpaw mewed in agreement. With her tail raised high they padded through the territory over to the WheatClan border.

When they reached moorlands, Clawpaw wrinkled her nose in disgust. In the very beginning before the Clans, they all had the same scent. Well, except for Clawpaw, Pineember, Fadedkit, and Cloudkit because they were all former loners and kittypets. But now they had different scents. Clawpaw frowned, since WheatClan smelled disgusting. Like foxes. "Ew." She muttered. Amberbite gave her a sharp look, but there was something in their gaze that showed that they didn't seem very irritated. More like... sad. *Oh,* Clawpaw realized. *Amberbite knew them and was very familiar with them. With this new scent and way that Lightstar's been acting, they aren't used to this.* She suddenly felt a surge of pity and wanting to comfort them.

They started to mark their own borders when three cats walked up to the two kits. Clawpaw easily recognized her mother Budtree and her new name, Clawcurl, but there was a third cat that Clawpaw didn't know who it was. It was a long-furred, silver tabby she-cat. She had sharp golden eyes, but what stuck out the most was the blue and gold collar around her neck. Clawpaw's eyes widened. *Another kittypet!* She realized.

Budtree's eyes widened at the sight of her daughter, but in a quick flash it was replaced with a bored expression. While Clawpaw understood that it was because she couldn't give away the secret, it still hurt that they couldn't share this information. Clawcurl noticed Budtree's stiffness and rested his tail on her shoulder soothingly. Clawcurl looked at Clawpaw and nodded, mouthing the words, "I know. Don't worry, the secrets safe with me." At first, Clawpaw was stunned. Clawcurl already knew? But she then relaxed. Clawcurl was her mother's mate and someone that the two cats could trust. Clawpaw felt comfortable about calling him her father. But her attention was soon dragged back to the stranger.

The silver tabby's fur bristled, and her eyes narrowed at the WetClan cats. "What are you doing so close to the border?" She questioned, her words as cold as ice. Clawpaw felt herself shrank from the former kittypet. The unusually spotted silver and white

tom rested one of his paws on the former kittypet. "Calm down, Niu, it's just a mentor showing their around. You don't have to get so defensive." Clawcurl explained. The tabby - was Niu her name? - seemed to have relaxed but sniffed. "Alright." Niu grumbled eventually.

Clawcurl gave Amberbite an apologetic look. Amberbite gave an understanding nod and replied, "We've all been defensive at least once in our lives. It's fine." They flicked their tail at Clawpaw. "Come on, Clawpaw. Let's go." Clawpaw nodded and followed her mentor after giving her mother a quick good-bye.

When they got out of sight of the WheatClan cats, Amberbite looked at their apprentice. "Do you still want to go over to GullClan?" They asked. Clawpaw nodded. "Yep!" She exclaimed. Amberbite nodded, though sighed. "Sometimes I wonder how you have so much energy."

Clawpaw smirked. "What, you're not *that* old." She replied teasingly. Amberbite let out a *mrrow* of laughter. "It feels like it though." They replied, cuffing one of Clawpaw's ears playfully. Clawpaw ducked just in time.

When they got to the border, gull squawked from above and landed on a nearby rock. Not wanting to seem too strange, Clawpaw and Amberbite slowed down their walking, waiting for any GullClan patrols.

It seemed as though luck - ironically since they were going to see a cat named Luck - was on their side today because a familiar black and light brown mottled she-cat walked out of the bushes by the border. Alone. *Huh, that's strange. Why isn't she with her mentor?* Clawpaw thought for a second but didn't ponder over it for too long. Instead, she charged out of the bushes and crashed into her friend. "Lucky!" She cried, and soon realized that she was on the other side of the border. Quickly, she hopped back onto her own territory and turned to face her friend.

Luckpaw's face soon brightened when she recognized Clawpaw. "Sock!" She exclaimed. She let out a purr of amusement. Amberbite soon came out and greeted Luckpaw. "Hello." They meowed slowly.

Luckpaw nodded to them in return. She looked back at Clawpaw. "Sock, it's great to see you, but I don't think that we should be talking. I don't want my Clanmates to think that I'm a traitor or something." She said with a worried expression.

Clawpaw frowned. "No one in the world would think that you're a traitor. And the warrior code just says that I have to be loyal to my Clan. It also says that it's fine to have friends in other Clans. So technically, it's okay for us to be here, and I'm not breaking the code." She explained.

"I still don't think it's a good idea... but I know that there's no stopping you." She said. Amberbite snorted. "You could say that again. Just earlier today she tried to swim out of camp by using the shallow tidepools." They said. Luckpaw blinked. "Wait- she did what." She looked back at her friend. "Why?" She asked."

Clawpaw shrugged. "I thought it would be fun." Luckpaw slapped her face with her paw in response.

Clawpaw smiled but looked around. The thought she had earlier started to come back. "Say, where's you mentor, Sneezewhisker? Did something happened to him, Luckpaw?" She asked.

Luckpaw's eyes widened. "Oh yeah! You don't know!" She replied, excitement starting to shine in her eyes. Clawpaw frowned. "I don't know what?" She asked. Did something happen? Was someone in trouble? That couldn't be it, Luckpaw seemed extremely happy.

"I'm a warrior now! I'm now called Luck*whisper*." She answered.

Clawpaw's jaw dropped. "You're a warrior now?!" She shrieked, and happiness soon overcame her. Luckpa- no, Luckwhisper nodded. "Yes, I just got my warrior name a few days ago." She answered. Clawpaw felt so happy for her! Her friend became a warrior one moon early. With that realization, Clawpaw soon remembered that that meant she was going to become a warrior next moon. Or at least, that's what's what should happen.

Amberbite smiled at the eleven-moon-old GullClan warrior. "Congrats." They replied. Though they looked up at the sky and

frowned. "Clawpaw, we should be getting home right around now."

The smoke apprentice whirled around. "What! No! We have so much to talk about." She cried. Amberbite shook their head. "You've already talked with her. We've been gone for a while and the Clan will get suspicious of where we have been." They replied.

Luckwhisper hesitated but agreed. "They're right you know. Besides, my Clan's going to get a little worried too if I come back after a while empty-pawed." She reached over and pressed her muzzle against the WetClan apprentice's own. Luckwhisper smiled. "Don't worry, we'll see each other at the next Gathering." She promised. Clawpaw sighed but murmured an agreement before turning to walk away.

Giving quick good-byes, the two headed back to their own Clans. Amberbite lowered their head. "Don't worry, I won't say a thing." They promised. Clawpaw looked up at them. "Thank you." She replied back as the two walked back to camp where they were faced with Clanmates that gave them curious glances.

But Clawpaw was too tired and padded to her den where she curled up and soon fell asleep. She dreamed about Luckwhisper and her mother Budtree, and one other thing that she hadn't thought about until very recently. The fact that she would become a warrior soon.

Chapter 15

Honeypaw yawned as daylight broke through the clouds and shined onto the apprentice den. With the light that made it annoying to sleep, he opened eyes. He noticed that his mentor, Wolfblotch was already up. She looked at some of the other warriors that were up.

"Ashmoss, Oatblur, can you go out on the dawn patrol?" She asked. The ginger tom nodded. "Of course." They said in unison. As the two walked away, Honeypaw got up and stretched. He soon left the apprentice den where Wolfblotch caught his gaze.

"Oh, hello, Honeypaw!" She greeted warmly. Honeypaw smiled. "Uh, hi Wolfblotch." He replied. He looked around. "Do you want me to do anything?" He asked, praying to StarClan that it wouldn't be gathering herbs with Boragewisp, collecting moss again, or any of that boring stuff. Wolfblotch frowned, looking unsure.

More cats started to come out of their dens, and Wolfblotch stood up straight, more certain. "I currently still have a lot to do, but I think that Amberbite needs a break so why don't you and Clawpaw go out hunting?" She suggested. Honeypaw nodded, though his fur prickled with unease. Clawpaw didn't seemed to like a whole lot, so he wasn't sure how she would take to having to patrol with him. Though he followed Wolfblotch's suggestion and padded over to Clawpaw who was yawning and stretching like he did a few minutes ago.

Clawpaw caught sight of him and let out a small groan. "Hi, Honeypaw." She meowed. "Do you want something?" She asked, sitting up straight. Honeypaw nodded. "Um, yeah. Wolfblotch wanted us to go on a hunting patrol." He explained. Clawpaw sighed but nodded. "Fine. Can I lead?" She asked. Honeypaw was about to say that he wanted to lead, to prove himself and show that he wasn't just some mewling kit that would sometimes climb onto Hightree, but he stopped himself. *Clawpaw is a lot older and more experienced than you.* He reminded himself.

Clawpaw blinked at him expectantly looking for an answer. "Well?" She asked, sounding exasperated. "Sure." Honeypaw said, shrugging. "I'm fine you with leading. Just as long as with don't do anything boring." Clawpaw rolled her eyes. "You should know that I don't do, 'boring.'" She replied back and padded away. Honeypaw sighed before scrambling to catch up.

As they got outside into the territory, Clawpaw almost immediately went over to the water and gasped. Honeypaw ran over to her. "Is something wrong?" He asked as Clawpaw started to pad through the water. She shook her head. "No, it's just that the water was colder than I expected." Clawpaw explained. Honeypaw looked down at the water curiously. He soon dipped on of his paws into the water, and expecting some sort of comfortable feeling he was greeted by an almost ice-cold zap. Like what you would feel during leaf-bare, and a breeze swept through.

He bounced back and turned to look at Clawpaw. "Well, leaf-bare is almost here." He replied. And it was true, the warmth of greenleaf was starting to fade as mornings and nights started to grow colder each time. Clawpaw nodded. "That's true." She paused for a moment. "Hey, could you go hunt land prey while I hunt in the water? I like to swim, and I've heard that you like stalking on the land." She explained.

Honeypaw nodded. He did like land prey, and besides, the water seemed too cold for him. And also he just woke up, he didn't feel like going on a swim. So, he hunted near the tall grass, constantly checking the wind for prey scents. The occasional splash from behind him informed that Clawpaw was coming back to breath, or she had caught a fish that had just woken up.

"Go farther out, all the prey would be asleep and for the prey that's awake wouldn't be near the ocean." Clawpaw advised. Honeypaw nodded and ventured farther away from the shore. Though he couldn't help but think of how he already should have thought of that. He had been an apprentice for a moon know! With that he couldn't help but feel like a failure. Why hadn't he had been more careful and actually traveled into the tall grass instead of hunt near the edges. Gloomily, he scented the air again and soon caught sight of a rabbit.

Careful to make sure that he wasn't upwind, he lowered himself to the ground and began to stalk the animal. When he was in reach Honeypaw let out a burst of energy and leaped. The rabbit heard the rustle and looked around wildly for its attacker before it was pinned by Honeypaw. The rabbit let out a shrill before going silent as Honeypaw bit on its throat. Feeling satisfied with his catch he continued onward to find some more.

Eventually he had managed to catch two mice and a gull before Clawpaw came over to him, suggesting that they should be heading back to camp. The two apprentices had picked up their kill, with Honeypaw feeling a hint of jealousy of all the fish Clawpaw had managed to catch. When they returned back to camp the clearing was buzzing.

The dawn patrol had came back. Ashmoss was talking with Boragewisp, Oatblur was grooming himself, Riverclaw and Howlpaw were play-fighting, and Amberbite and Fuzzstar were talking to each other in low voices with their heads close. Honeypaw couldn't hear what they were saying, but he had a suspicion that it had something to do with his denmate, Clawpaw. It was only encouraged when Fuzzstar gave the older apprentice a strange look.

With that was when Honeypaw realized that Clawpaw would be becoming a warrior the next moon. And while he was happy, that showed that Clawpaw was such an experienced cat and was ready to be a warrior. Not only that, but he remembered that Howlpaw, was also older than him and might get his name before him. He was very calm and was great with a lot of things which made Honeypaw rethink of all the troublemaking actions he did. With that he glumly dropped his piece of fresh-kill onto the fresh-kill pile. He then walked over to his nest, not wanting to think about anything really.

He laid down on his moss nest, which made him feel relaxed yes, but also a little sleepy. He ignored the grumbling in his stomach and sighed. He lowered his head, letting his chin rest on onto his nest. A shadow fell over him, causing him to look up. He saw the familiar mottled pelt of his mentor, Wolfblotch.

Wolfblotch dropped a salmon which he guessed was caught by the

river near BubbleClan. She nudged it to her apprentice. "Why don't you eat, we can go on a patrol after you do." Honeypaw nodded and soon took a bit into the salmon, where he felt his hunger become satisfied. When he had finished, he stood up and looked at Wolfblotch. "I'm good." Wolfblotch nodded and stood up. "Alright." She replied and got up.

The two soon got out of camp and Wolfblotch padded through the territory, but she seemed to notice Honeypaw walking alongside her very quietly. His thoughts swam through his mind, clouding it. Wolfblotch frowned. "Are you okay?" She asked, stopping and sitting down. Honeypaw hesitated, not knowing what to say. "It's just that..." He paused. Wolfblotch pressed a paw on of his. "Please tell me." She said, worrying glinting in her eyes.

Honeypaw sighed. "It's just that... sometimes I feel like a failure. The other apprentices are doing so well, and I just feel like I'm falling. All the other cats think about me is that I'm the jokester. That I'm the prankster and I'll the failures that I do. I feel like that's all this Clan will think of me. And I don't want that." He admitted, feeling as though he was going to break down as he continued to spill his insecurities. *Especially Howlpaw.* He thought, thinking about his best friend.

Wolfblotch's gray eyes softened and rested her tail on her apprentice's shoulders comforting. "No one is going to remember your mistakes, but only yourself if you keep thinking like this." She said after a while. "Don't think like that. And besides, there will be cats to support you, don't think that all cats are going to think are your failures. They will remember your adventures and nature, your dreams and abilities to take care of your Clan." She said.

Feeling comforted by these words, Honeypaw looked up at his mentor. "Thanks, Wolfblotch." He murmured. Wolfblotch smiled gently and wrapped her tail around him. "You're welcome, Honeypaw." She replied. Honeypaw let in the warmth before bouncing onto his paws and looking at his mentor. "So, what are we going to do now?" He asked.

They trained a little while before heading back to camp to rest up. By the time they came back the sun had risen high enough to show

that it was sun-high. The Clan shared tongues and gossip, letting themselves relax. When suddenly, Fuzzstar, Ashmoss, and Oatblur barged into camp dragging a dead shark that had already gotten some bites in it behind them.

Fuzzstar and Ashmoss padded through the Clan, with both of their heads raised high with pride. Even Oatblur seemed energetic. "What in the name of StarClan!" Amberbite exclaimed, rushing forward to look at the animal that the Clan considers prey. Honeypaw walked over to it, staring at it in awe. "Wow, where did you get this?" He asked, looking back at the patrol.

Fuzzstar smiled. "We were out patrolling when he saw a fox eating it. We managed to easily beat the fox off. Now we have another food to feast on." The Clan started to yowl for the patrol.

Honeypaw swished his tail. He thought about how that the Clan helped each other and supported each other. And with that his insecurities started to fade once more. He thought about what Wolfblotch said about how no one will remember his mistakes, but only himself and how he shouldn't think too hard on himself. He had never believed in his mentor's words as much as he did now.

Chapter 16

Today was the day. The day when Clawpaw would be given her warrior name. The winds have gotten a lot colder and the plants in camp had started to die and wither, preparing for leaf-bare. Even prey was starting hide. Leaf-fall was coming. While ice and snow haven't come yet, it is obvious that it will soon. Even the tidepool in camp has started to freeze over from the cold.

As Clawpaw stared at the ocean her eyes flicking to the dark clouds looming in the distance. She shivered as a cold breeze ruffled against her fur. She felt both excited and yet concerned. Amberbite had informed her about the assessment the day before and Clawpaw had never felt so ready but not.

"Are you ready?" A soft meow asked, making Clawpaw whirl around to see her mentor. She sighed and sat down, looking down at her paws.

"I'm not sure." Clawpaw sighed. Amberbite walked over and wrapped their apprentice. "Don't worry. I'm sure that you're going to be fine." They said. Clawpaw looked up at the ginger and white cat. "Are you sure?" She asked. Amberbite nodded and gently rested their head on Clawpaws.

Clawpaw soon stood up. "Alright, I'm feeling a lot more confident now. When are we going to start the assessment?" She asked. Amberbite smiled and flicked his tail at Fuzzstar who had been watching their conversation from afar. Clawpaw didn't know why, but her eyes caught to her leader's, and she felt lighter somehow.

Fuzzstar smiled at Clawpaw. "We can start right now." She said before leading the other two away. Amberbite followed Fuzzstar with Clawpaw from behind. Some cats seemed to stop and looked at Clawpaw, and even some meowing good luck for Clawpaw. The gray smoke she-cat thought about how she had first joined the group of cats as a kittypet, not knowing anyone there. Now she was one of the respected, liked cats in WetClan. With that thought she

raised her head higher and straightened up her tail.

When they left camp and went closer to the shore, the group stopped. Fuzzstar turned to face Clawpaw, her eyes glistening with excitement. Clawpaw understood why, this would be the second cat who would earn their warrior name in the Clan.

Clawpaw swished her tail. "So, what do I have to do?" She asked. Fuzzstar flicked her tail, smiling. "Patience, Clawpaw." Fuzzstar meowed looking back at the waves that crashed onto the shore. It was loud, but not so loud that they needed to shout.

Fuzzstar soon turned back to face the old apprentice. "This assessment has three parts, hunting, fighting, and diving." Clawpaw blinked. She knew that the assessment would be long, since Oatblur had told her about his own assessment. Clawpaw nodded. "When does it begin?" She asked. Fuzzstar got up and led her to the tall grass. "It starts as soon as you step to that rock over there." She answered, indicating to the small gray rock not too far away. Clawpaw nodded and walked over to it, and she soon heard a rustle from behind her.

Clawpaw looked around and saw that Amberbite and Fuzzstar were already gone. *Hiding in the grass.* She realized. She sighed looked around at the tall grass, ignoring the wind that slashed through her fur. Clawpaw opened her mouth, trying to taste all the scents that the wind carried. When she caught the scent of a mouse, she fell to the ground and inched forward. The scent becoming stronger and stronger until she spotted the brown creature. While she felt excited and was about swish her tail, she kept it still. She didn't want it to scare it.

When she got close enough, she leaped forward and caught the mouse, which squeaked in shock as she clamped her jaws around it. She bit it down, quickly killing it. With that she buried the mouse so that she could get it later. Feeling excited and proud of how fast she had managed to catch her prey she continued the hunting part with new-found energy.

Clawpaw soon managed to catch another mouse, a rabbit, and a vole for land prey, and she went over and managed to catch a

salmon in a nearby river. However, she didn't manage to catch everything she spotted which did irritate her a bit.

Clawpaw soon quietly walked over to get the prey she had caught when Fuzzstar and Amberbite soon came out of some bushes. Amberbite seemed very proud of her, which made Clawpaw puff up with pride. She looked at Fuzzstar to see what she would do, but the she-cat didn't give any signs of excitement nor disappointment, only keeping on an expressionless face.

Clawpaw awkwardly looked down at her paws. "So, how did I do?" She asked. Fuzzstar looked at Amberbite, but didn't answer her question right away. "This is the end of the hunting part. Now you must manage to pin Amberbite for five seconds without them getting up during that time." She responded. "And I'll carry your prey." She added.

Clawpaw nodded, and followed Amberbite to the shore where they could fight in the slippery sand. Fuzzstar had settled down farther away with the prey in front of her. "Now!" She yowled, signaling them to start.

Amberbite and Clawpaw circled around each other, and Clawpaw waited for her mentor to strike. Amberbite then leaped forward but luckily their claws were sheathed. Clawpaw sprang out of the way, but Amberbite caught her back legs and pulled her to the ground. The apprentice hissed and swirled around and smacked them in the face with her paw pads. Not her claws, otherwise she would have slashed open their face.

Amberbite stumbled backward, their green-yellow eyes widening in surprise. Clawpaw, using it to her advantage, she lunged forward, pushing them backwards causing them to fall onto the ground. Amberbite let out a grunt of annoyance as they were pressed to the ground. Clawpaw started to count, when Amberbite spun around and kicked Clawpaw to the ground. She let out a growl in response.

Amberbite spun around and wacked her with their tail. Not expecting that turn of events, Clawpaw stumbled backward. She shook her head and leaped onto their back, digging her claws into their back. Clawpaw knocked the back of their head with a swipe of

her paw.

Amberbite let out a gasp of shock and seemed winded. They fell to the ground and that's when Clawpaw started to count. Amberbite was starting to get up, but Clawpaw would just press their head to the sandy ground. Soon after five seconds have passed, Fuzzstar stood up, her eyes warm and soft. She walked over to the two cats. "The time has passed, and Clawpaw has won." She said, nodding to the gray she-cat.

Clawpaw soon got off her mentor and glanced at them who got up as well. Amberbite glanced at her with pride shining in their eyes. Clawpaw felt her fur raise happily. Clawpaw looked at Amberbite, smiling. She turned back to face her leader. "What's next, Fuzzstar? I can take it." She said, and soon remembered that it was swimming. She sat up, her head raised. "I can swim." She added.

Fuzzstar's whiskers twitched. "I know that." She replied, flicking her tail. She kinked her tail, indicating Amberbite and Clawpaw to follow her. They both did and came across the water and walked to it. She hissed and Clawpaw guessed it was from the cold. Anxiety soon started to bubble up, and know she realized that she would have to be swimming during chilly leaf-bare where the water was colder than it was during greenleaf.

Fuzzstar looked at Clawpaw. "Yesterday I found a pearl near the shore. I planted it near a coral reef, and now I want you to retrieve it." She said, explaining the assignment. Clawpaw nodded and walked forward. Fuzzstar watched her before padding over to the long-furred ginger and white cat by the shore.

Clawpaw sighed and stepped forward. The water was cold as ice and splashed through her fur, making it stink to her fur and making her even colder. She let out a gasp of shock. She walked farther into the water, gritting her teeth. Eventually, when the water came to her chin and she needed to paddle, she took in a deep breath and pushed her head under.

Clawpaw had to use a lot of willpower to make sure that she wouldn't let the rest of her air out when the cold blasted onto her face. She shook her head and looked down at the water. It was

already dark in the sky, with clouds rolling in. But it was even darker the lower she dived through the water. Though something she did notice was that the farther she went the more fish she found. She would have to remember to tell them.

Clawpaw soon swam deeper and deeper, and soon saw a coral reef which she guessed was the one Fuzzstar was using. But as she thought about it, she realized that she had been there for a while and was losing the air. *I have to be quick.* She swam around the reef, scaring away some of the fish that were swimming in their own groups. Anemones and other ocean plants were stuck to the rocks alongside the coral.

Clawpaw looked around, swimming and examining all the rocks until she noticed that something shimmered in the corner of her eye. Clawpaw swam over to it and gently brushed some of the sand off of the object to reveal a shining, smooth white stone that glimmered in the sunlight. *A pearl!* She thought and carefully picked it up with her paws and faced the ripples on the water surface. Quickly, since she felt as though she was running out of air, she swam to the surface, pushing her way to the top with what was left of her strength.

She felt as though she was going to give up when she finally reached the surface. When she reached the surface, a large splash followed her out with her gasping in the air. She looked at the shore where Amberbite and Fuzzstar were yowling happily. Clawpaw swam through the cold water which she had grown used to you, so it didn't feel as cold.

When she reached the beach and escaped the water, she felt the wind seize her again and she felt as though she was an ice cube. She shivered and shook her body, spraying water around like dogs would do after a bath. When she was done Amberbite walked over to her, purring in amusement. She looked at her leader, Fuzzstar. "What do I do with this?" She asked, her voice muffled since she had picked up the pearl with her mouth.

Fuzzstar dug a small hole and curled her tail to point at it. "Put it here." She said. Clawpaw nodded and gently placed in there. Fuzzstar looked at Clawpaw with pride shimmering in her eyes.

"Your assessment is done. Let's go back to camp so you can warm up and rest." She said. The group quickly grabbed the prey that Clawpaw had caught earlier before heading back to camp.

When they came back to camp everyone froze and stared at the group. They dropped the prey onto the fresh-kill pile and Clawpaw soon abandoned her leader and mentor and headed to the apprentice den. Clawpaw soon flopped onto her nest, ignoring Honeypaw's questions about what the assessment was like and soon fell asleep.

When she woke up, she saw that cats were murmuring to one another. She walked out of the den and saw that Amberbite and Fuzzstar whispering to each other. Clawpaw frowned and walked over to Oatblur. "What's going on?" She asked.

Oatblur shrugged. "I'm not entirely sure." He replied.

Clawpaw frowned but didn't pressed it.

Fuzzstar soon leaped onto HighTree when she finished her conversation with Amberbite who walked over to Riverclaw. "Let all cats old enough to pad through the water, gather around the HighTree for a Clan meeting!" She yowled. Already, many cats have already been in the clearing, but some cats did join. "Naming ceremonies have grown on me, and I am excited to announce a new cat is to join the other warriors." The clearing started to whisper to each other excitedly. Clawpaw felt her heart race, she was going to become a warrior! This was it! This was something that she wanted to happen for six moons.

Fuzzstar glanced at Amberbite. "Amberbite, has your apprentice learned the skills of a warrior, and does she understand the importance of the warrior code?" She asked.

Amberbite nodded. "She has." They replied.

Fuzzstar nodded and looked at the rest of the Clan. "I, Fuzzstar, leader of WetClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down upon this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend her to you a warrior in her

turn. Clawpaw, do promise to uphold the warrior code, and to protect and defend your Clan even at the cost of your life?" She questioned.

She hesitated, and looked at her mentor who gave her a friendly nudge. Clawpaw looked back up at her leader. "I do." She said.

Fuzzstar smiled. "Then by the power of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Clawpaw, from this moment on, you will be known as Clawstrike. StarClan honors your candor, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WetClan." Fuzzstar leaped down from HighTree and pressed her muzzle against Clawstrike's head who licked her shoulder in response for respect and honor.

"Clawstrike! Clawstrike!" The Clan cheered the former kittypet's new name.

Clawstrike puffed out her chest with happiness. Once she had thought that she would be only a former kittypet, now she was a beloved Clan member. Clawstrike looked at her former mentor who was smiling at her. "Thank you." She murmured. Amberbite nodded and dipped their head. "You're welcome." They replied. Clawstrike turned back to the many Clanmates that were congratulating her. She did wish that her mother was there, but she was just to finally have her warrior name.

She was no longer Sock, but Clawstrike.

Chapter 17

Honeypaw crouched low and circled around his mentor with narrow eyes. Wolfblotch had suggested to practice fighting moves by sparring. While Honeypaw didn't really feel like sparring that day, a fun idea started to grow in his mind, and he decided that he wanted to do it. Wolfblotch had been excited and brought them to the shore.

Honeypaw swished his tail and leaped forward, paws outstretched. Wolfblotch purred and dodged the incoming blow, sending Honeypaw crashing down onto the sandy ground, faceplanting. He got up and spat out sand that had gotten into his mouth. "That's gross." He muttered before getting thrown to the ground again by his mentor who hovered over him.

Honeypaw looked up at the mottled she-cat with wide eyes. "Oof!" He yelped as he felt the grainy sediment scrape him.

Wolfblotch lashed her tail. "You got to be more aware. Your opponent will notice when you're distracted and will take that to their advantage." She informed him.

Honeypaw huffed at that. He managed to wiggle out of his mentor's grasp and sprang onto his mentor's back. With her fallen, Honeypaw went for every vulnerable spot he knew. "TICKLE ATTACK!" He yowled.

Wolfblotch let out many *mrrrows* of laughter from Honeypaw's strike. Eventually Honeypaw bounced off, his job done. Wolfblotch let out a few more purrs before calming down. The brown and black mottled she-cat soon got up, with an amused look in her gray eyes. Honeypaw raised his tail straight up into the sky and looked at his mentor with a smug look. "Well, how did I do?" He asked.

Wolfblotch smiled and gently rested her tail on the apprentice's shoulder. "Not exactly what I was thinking of. But it would definitely help in a fight." Wolfblotch paused and scrunched up her

nose in a thinking position. "Probably." She added.

Honeypaw smiled at his mentor's praise. *Yeah, I could those skills in a battle with a fox, right?* He thought.

The two decided to go back to camp and Honeypaw skipped the entire way, he was on a good mood and so did Wolfblotch it seemed. As the group continued walking home, Wolfblotch stopped and looked at something farther away. Honeypaw frowned and padding over to his mentor. He looked up at her. "What's wrong?" He asked. Wolfblotch didn't respond and cokced her head. A shimmer of light caught Honeypaw's eyes, and he turned to spot something in the sand.

That's when Honeypaw realized that it was a cat under the sand. At least... it looked like a cat. It was golden and wasn't breathing, with the sunlight shining on it. Wolfblotch shuddered. "Let's go." She mewed and turned to walk away. Honeypaw looked at the strange object once more before scrambling to catch up with his mentor.

When they reached back to camp, Honeypaw spotted Howlpaw eating a fish near the apprentice den. Without Wolfblotch saying anything, he charged forward to his friend. He noticed Oatblur purring to Wolfblotch. "He's something, isn't he?"

Wolfblotch smiled at her former apprentice. "Well, Honeypaw's quite a pawful. Not like you were, but I'm still proud of him." She replied.

Oatblur nodded. "You are a great mentor." He murmured. Wolfblotch and Oatblur soon walked off over to some stone to sunbathe.

Honeypaw had overheard their conversation but didn't give a whole lot of focus to that. Instead, he crouched low and slowly approached the black tabby who didn't seem that aware of what Honeypaw was planning. The ginger tom stalked, as though he was hunting prey. He wiggled his headquarters before leaping into the air.

"HAHA, GOT YOU!" Honeypaw exclaimed and came crashing down

onto the other tom. Howlpaw let out a gasp of shock and when the surprise wore off, he started to purr alongside Honeypaw. Something inside of Honeypaw twist and make him feel like a cloud, though he ignored the feelings.

Howlpaw purred at Honeypaw. "Wow, I didn't even see you coming!" He laughed before going back to the salmon he was eating earlier. Honeypaw smiled and snuggled closer to him.

"Can I have some?" He asked casually. Howlpaw nodded and Honeypaw took a large chunk off of the fish. Howlpaw wrapped his tail around Honeypaw who purred. He felt his pelt began to warm up and when the two toms looked at each other, Honeypaw felt his ears burn and the two cats looked away soon after.

Farther away Honeypaw noticed Ashmoss and Riverclaw sharing tongues and bathing in the sunlight on a rock near the shore. The two seemed at peace and were staring at each other with a glint of something else in their eyes. Honeypaw's whiskers twitched in amusement. "Hey, did you know that Rivermoss was a thing?" He asked Howlpaw.

Howlpaw frowned. "What are you talking about?" The black tabby asked, cocking his head. His gaze shifted to where his mentor and Ashmoss were. The tabby's eyes widened. "I didn't know that they liked each other!" He exclaimed. He looked back at Honeypaw. "Though, what's 'Rivermoss'?" He asked.

Honeypaw sighed and rolled his yellow eyes. "Their mate name of course!" He exclaimed.

Howlpaw blinked in confusion, his ear flicking. "Wha-"

"Never mind."

The two soon got over their little game and continued to eat and gossip more about the other Clans. Howlpaw also brought up the fact that the Gathering was soon, which Honeypaw had shyly replied that he had completely forgotten about that. Eventually Riverclaw and Ashmoss had stopped, and Riverclaw called Howlpaw over to come join on them on a patrol. With a quick

good-bye the two toms grew apart and Honeypaw was soon all alone.

Honeypaw sighed and looked down at his paws, wondering what trouble he could get into. Though he didn't want Wolfblotch to get too angry at him. As he was thinking about it, he realized that he had really grown on his mentor. She was nice and patient with him, and Honeypaw understood that he could sometimes be a bit of a menace. As Honeypaw walked over to the gaze at the ocean, he let the breeze ruffle his fur. He took in the cold, leaf-fall wind. It was refreshing and really nice. He preferred it a lot more than the crazy heat of greenleaf. But at least then he could swim. Now the water was so cold, he might just turn into an icicle if he went in!

Honeypaw chuckled to himself with that thought. There was a sudden splash that sent water spraying, soaking him wet. He jumped back to see Boragewisp who was glaring at him with narrowed eyes. Honeypaw shook the water off and glared at Boragewisp. "What was that for?" He snapped.

Boragewisp huffed, lashing her tail back and forth. "You should be doing something to contribute to the Clan. Don't forget that we are still a small Clan, despite how long we have been here." The medicine cat retorted.

"But earlier today I went hunting, and then I trained with Wolfblotch! What more do you want?" He snarled.

"I heard that it was a tickle fight, not an actual sparring fight."

"Why do you care? You're not my mentor."

Boragewisp growled. "I am your medicine cat though; I have a higher rank. Meaning I have more authority over you. I haven't seen you doing anything other than hanging out with your tom-friend." She hissed. Honeypaw felt his fur raise from that. *We aren't tom-friends! Just friends! Why can't anyone see that?* He wondered.

Honeypaw rolled his eyes at the spotted pale and white she-cat as he padded back to his den. Though he could feel her amber and blue gaze burning into his pelt. He shuddered and soon walked over

to his mossy nest that also contained feather and shells for decoration. He laid down on his nest. He sighed and rested his eyes to take a nap.

He was prodded awake to see Howlpaw. Honeypaw yawned and blinked at the black tabby sleepily. "How long was I out?" He asked.

Howlpaw shrugged. "I'm not sure. Riverclaw and I tried to practice fighting techniques, but they didn't step up. I think that something was on their mind. So, we went back early." Howlpaw's gaze softened as he curled his tail around Honeypaw. "Did something happen?" He asked.

Honeypaw sighed. "Boragewisp scolded me again." He replied.

[image]

Howlpaw shook her head. "I don't know what's wrong with her. I'm guessing that she's just getting a little grumpier the older she is. You know that she's a rule-follower." The black tabby tom pointed out.

Honeypaw sighed. "I guess." He looked at his paws. "I'm just so tired of how everyone scolds me. Is wrong to be a little silly?" He replied.

The black tabby stared back at Honeypaw, studying him. "No, it's not wrong to be the comic-relief. but I think that there are some areas were being silly won't help. It would make things worse actually." He said finally.

The younger apprentice sighed. "You know what, you're right, Howlpaw." He murmured. Howlpaw smiled and gently licked Honeypaw reassuringly. The two toms smiled and purred. However, there was a sudden wail of distress and the two apprentices glanced at each other in horror before rushing out to the clearing.

Ashmoss and Oatblur came crashing into camp with an injured Amberbite between them. Honeypaw pulled his ears back in horror. Amberbite was carried between the other two warriors, and they seemed injured. Their leg seemed brutally mangled, and blood dripped from the wound. The ginger and white cat didn't seem like they could walk, and they groaned in pain.

Cats started to surround the group with wide, terrified eyes. "Help! Some cat help them!" Oatblur yowled.

Boragewisp charged forward and flicked her tail at Oatblur. "Bring them to my den." She ordered harshly. Her eyes were shining with worried. Honeypaw blinked in surprise. It was clear that Boragewisp never liked Amberbite, but she still wouldn't let a cat die. Oatblur nodded and helped Amberbite to the medicine den.

As the Clan watched the two warriors pad to the medicine den, Fuzzstar whipped her head to face Ashmoss who was being comforted by Riverclaw. "What happened?" She demanded, her eyes wide and her fur bristling with worry and anger. Though Honeypaw could easily smell the fear scent radiating from Fuzzstar.

Ashmoss steadied her breathing and looked back at Fuzzstar. "We were on a hunting patrol near the WheatClan border. Amberbite saw a rabbit just right over the border, and we thought it would be okay. After all, it was right by the border. And Amberbite leaped forward to it, but a WheatClan patrol had spotted us and attacked them. Badly." She shuddered and looked down at her paws, ashamed.

So, Amberbite got hurt by bending the warrior code? He thought, shivering. Ashmoss did seem very upset with herself. Fuzzstar looked into the she-cat's cyan eyes with disappointment. However it was soon filled with rage. Honeypaw flattened his ears. He didn't want Fuzzstar to be so harsh on the she-cat's patrol. However, Fuzzstar seemed more angry with WheatClan. "Those little pieces of fox-dung!" She spat.

She looked up at Ashmoss, and tilted the dappled cat's as well. "Ashmoss, I am upset that you have broken the warrior code by stealing prey from another Clan. Though I see that you have already learned your lesson." The tabby added when Ashmoss looked like she was going to defend herself. Fuzzstar's green eyes darkened. "Though it did not give WheatClan an excuse to nearly kill one of my cats." She snarled.

She turned to face the rest of the Clan. "At the night of the Gathering, I will question Lightstar about this act." She announced.

The Clan murmured to each other, with worried expressions.

Riverclaw let out a yowl. "WheatClan will not get away with this!" They snarled. Some of the Clan cheered, while others seem more insecure. Honeypaw caterwauled with the gray and white cat. Though Howlpaw gave him a 'no-no' look. The ginger tom quieted down.

Fuzzstar frowned. "Now, I want to get some justice like you Riverclaw, but I don't think that we should progress to vengeance. Otherwise, it will just be an endless circle, you know how Lightstar acts you know." Fuzzstar replied. Riverclaw's tail drooped, and they grumbled something under their breath.

Fuzzstar flicked her tail to the rest of the Clan. "But do not worry. The other Clans will know about this. After all, the Gathering is just a few days away." She hissed with narrowed eyes.

Chapter 18

The group of WetClan cats soon gathered around Fuzzstar as the sun slowly started to set. Honeypaw anxiously awaited by the apprentice den to meet up with Howlpaw who had gone to the dirtplace. He let out a sigh of relief when he noticed the familiar black tabby pelt. Howlpaw squeezed through his Clanmates to reach Honeypaw. The two toms friendly greeted each other before looking back at their leader.

The brown tabby she-cat looked down upon her Clanmates from HighTree and swished her tail. The sound of waves crashes, the squeals of a seagull from the distance, and the light illuminating from behind commanded attention to the leader. "All cats going to Gathering, come with me, we are leaving now." She said before jumping off and kinking her tail for the rest to follow.

Honeypaw and Howlpaw walked side-by-side and noticed that Boragewisp had poked her head from the medicine den to murmur safe traveling. She had announced the day before that she would watch over Amberbite since their wounds seem to make her nervous. Riverclaw walked over to the she-cat with fear in their eyes and said, "Please make sure that they are safe." Boragewisp stared back into Riverclaw's hazel eyes before nodding.

"I will." She replied.

Riverclaw seemed a little more reassured with that and returned back to walk with Ashmoss. Honeypaw's whiskers twitched. *Heh, Rivermoss for life.* He thought with amusement. Howlpaw noticed to where the ginger tabby was looking at and sighed, slapping his face with a paw. Honeypaw let out a dramatic sigh, copying Howlpaw who gave him 'the look' in retaliation. The two apprentices laughed before realizing that they needed to catch up.

Wolfblotch looked at the two apprentices with an amused look. "Well, you two seem to be having fun." She joked.

Honeypaw rolled his eyes. "We're apprentices. We're supposed to have fun in our youth." He responded. Wolfblotch only smiled however.

Not too long after, the WetClan cats soon came upon the Gathering place and Wolfblotch and Fuzzstar went to take their place by the Great Willow. *It's so strange that Boragewisp isn't here.* Honeypaw thought to himself. Looking around, he noticed that the only other Clan there was BubbleClan. *Huh, I wonder where the others are.* He wondered.

Searching for the group of apprentices, Howlpaw nudged him. Honeypaw blinked. "What is it?" He asked.

Howlpaw pointed to a group of familiar cats over there. "They're over there. Come on!" He mewed before padding off toward their friends.

Honeypaw bounced to his paws. "Wait for me!" He exclaimed and dashed forward. Leaving a bit of a trail of dust. The two WetClan apprentices soon joined the group of familiar faces and noticed that Clawstrike was also there, despite being a warrior and was talking to Ridgepaw. Or whatever his warrior name was, since he was twelve moons old.

Fadedpaw, a dorsal-striped black she-cat, bounced forward and tackled Honeypaw to the ground. "Hi, Honeypaw!" She cried out happily but was almost immediately ripped off of Honeypaw by Cloudpaw.

After Honeypaw had been freed, Cloudpaw turn to look at the WetClan apprentices with a tired look. "Sorry about that, she's a wildfire sometimes." The pale ticked she-cat said.

"I'm right here."

"I'm aware." Cloudpaw said and looked back at Fadedpaw. Though when the two she-cats caught each other's gazes, it was long, and something flickered between them. Cloudpaw shook her head as though she was trying to clear it and face the toms, but there was a smile on her face. Honeypaw and Howlpaw looked at each other,

with Honeypaw giving him a smirk.

Howlpaw flicked his tail. "It's fine. I have a troublemaker myself." He said, nudging Honeypaw.

Honeypaw blinked in shock and gasped dramatically. "Oh how could you Howlpaw! Don't you realize how hurtful that is?" He said playfully and dramatically, falling onto his Clanmate. Howlpaw rolled his eyes and mouthed 'You see what I mean?' to the other cats who giggled.

Clawstrike sighed. "Yep, this is basically my life now." She said. Ridgepaw gave her a sympathetic look.

Soon GullClan and later WheatClan arrived with many cats giving WheatClan angry looks. A large group of apprentices and also Luckwhisper joined them. Everyone gawked at Houndpaw in particular, who had bits of wheat and other grain on her. Though no one said anything. That was until Siltpaw asked, "What's with the plants?" He asked.

Houndpaw bristled at his question. Honeypaw sighed. Houndpaw had originally been such a shy, nervous cat but lately she's been very grumpy and rude. Then again, not super surprising with Lightstar being her mentor. "Our Clan has decided that whenever an apprentice becomes a warrior, their pelt is adorned with plants in honor of our name and the plants could also help keep the warrior awake during their vigil." She explained as though they should already know that.

Locustpaw blinked in surprise. "You're a warrior?" Houndpaw nodded.

Clawstrike purred and Luckwhisper purred and meowed congratulations. They were soon followed by the other apprentices. Soon a smile cracked on Houndpaw. "I'm Houndstripe now." She explained. Houndpaw-no, Houndstripe looked at Ridgepaw. "What's your warrior name?" She asked.

Clawstrike almost immediately started to shake her head violently while Ridgepaw winced. "Uhm, actually, I'm still an apprentice." He

admitted. "Since Flowerchomp has been taking care of her litter, Sporeleap had been keeping an eye on my training and she says that I'm not ready yet." He admitted.

The apprentices were silent for a moment when Howlpaw said, "Well, I hope that you get your name soon." Ridgepaw gave him a thankful look.

The group of cats chatted a little longer and continued to talk and gossip until the Gathering started. A yowl came from the Great Willow and the Clans quieted, paying attention to the leaders who were about to speak. Petuniastar took a few steps forward to start her speech about her Clan. Honeypaw noticed that Fuzzstar was in the dark, glaring at Lightstar.

"GullClan is doing well! Our cats are better, and we have even met yet other cats outside of the Clans. Though they don't seem to be dangerous so I'm not too worried. We also have many herbs and-" She started before she was cut off.

"Yes, speaking about herbs and medicine cats, Fuzzstar, where is yours?" Lightstar asked with a smug look.

Fuzzstar bristled in anger. "Oh," She started, her voice dripping like poison. "Well, we have a very badly injured cat back in camp and Boragewisp is watching over them. Though I'm *sure* that you know who I'm talking about." She hissed. Lightstar didn't reply but narrowed his eyes instead.

Luckwhisper looked at Clawstrike with wide eyes. "What does she mean? Who's injured?" She asked. Clawstrike looked away awkwardly.

"Er- you- you'll hear about it later." Was the only thing she said. Luckwhisper still looked concerned but didn't push it.

Petuniastar looked back at the crowd of Clan cats awkwardly. "Uhm, that's all for GullClan." She mumbled and took a step and gave Fiercestar a pleading look. Probably not wanting Lightstar nor Fuzzstar to speak in case of a shouting match. Fiercestar nodded and flicked her tail though she herself look very upset.

"BubbleClan doesn't have much to say, but tragically one of our kits, Vinekit, has gotten kittencough." There were gasps from the Clan cats and Honeypaw looked up at the stars and sent a silent prayer to keep the young kit safe. He didn't want the kit to die so young.

Fiercestar nodded and looked at Lightstar hesitantly for him to speak. The light brown and white tom stepped forward with his chest puffed out. "I would probably like to announce that we have a new warrior! Please welcome Houndstripe!"

"Houndstripe! Houndstripe!" The Clans cheered, though some were more quieter than others.

Lightstar smiled. "WheatClan is strong, and we prove that by the borders." He paused and gave Fuzzstar a sly look. "If there is even one trespass, we will not let it go by. WheatClan will be filled of cats that you should take seriously." He said.

Fuzzstar snorted. "Oh yeah? That's supposed to excuse nearly *killing* one of my Clanmates? She replied, just as harshly.

Wisptail stood up, bristling. "They were stealing prey!" She exclaimed, unsheathing her claws. "That's against the code, so they deserve punishment."

Ashmoss stood up next. "You were the one that hurt them! Do you really think that badly wounding another warrior because of one mouse-brain rabbit is righteous?" She hissed. Wisptail only rolled her eyes at Ashmoss who gritted her teeth.

Fuzzstar sighed. "Ashmoss, calm down." She ordered. The dappled she-cat hesitated but soon sat down, still giving Wisptail a sour look. She looked back down at her cats and meowed, "While this a very... interesting Gathering. I would like to announce that we also have a new warrior. Please welcome Clawstrike!"

"Clawstrike! Clawstrike!" The Clans cheered as Clawstrike stuck out her tongue and puffed out her chest. Though everyone was quieter and was very tense after the shouting match.

"Well," Fiercestar murmured, but still loud enough for all to hear. "I

guess that this is all. BubbleClan is leaving." She said and started to climb down the Great Willow without another word. Sporeleap and the others started to follow the long-furred she-cat. Ridgepaw sighed and gave a quick good-bye before running off to catch up with his Clanmates along with Cloudpaw and Fadedpaw.

Petuniastar sighed and licked Fuzzstar's cheek and murmured a good-bye as well before climbing down the willow and the rest of her own Clan following. Lightstar and Fuzzstar glanced at each other and the two Clans were hissing at each other. Fuzzstar only scoffed at Lightstar and called the rest of her Clan to follow her.

"Bye, Houndstripe." Howlpaw said to the tortoiseshell she-cat.

Houndstripe rolled her eyes. "Whatever." She muttered. Howlpaw looked hurt but Honeypaw went over to his denmate and wrapped his tail around him. Honeypaw then helped Howlpaw lead him to the Clan.

Though as Honeypaw looked back at the clearing, he could practically taste the tension. And he was scared that it would someday break.

Chapter 19

Clawstrike quietly walked through the territory, she had always liked walking across the beach. It helped clear her head. As Clawstrike padded through the territory, her thoughts began to wander. Mainly worrying for her mentor started to prickle through her pelt. Everyone was anxious for them, but Boragewisp seemed one of the most nervous out of all of them. And everyone in the Clan knew that Boragewisp despises Amberbite.

As Clawstrike sighed once more and leaped onto a rock, thinking that jumping and running could help either clearing her thoughts or making them louder so she could concentrate on them. Honestly it was nice. She leaped onto another rock, and another, and another. Her paws landing each time on the cold, wet dark surface of the rocks that were out by the shore. The waves lapped at the rocks, making them cold and wet. Clawstrike still managed to cling onto the rocks with ease and walked out to the farthest one so she could sit down and stare at the ocean. The wind ruffling against her fur.

Amberbite really liked Clawstrike and seemed to have a connection with her. Some even say that they have a parent's love and care for her. Clawstrike couldn't agree with her side, but she still really liked them. The idea of losing her former mentor... hurt. She sighed again. Glancing back, she noticed a small, round and smooth pebble that she could easily pick up. She grabbed it and placed it gently in front of her. Quickly, she stretched her arm back and released it, smacking the pebble away to the ocean.

She watched as it bounced across the ocean, sending ripples away from the spots that the pebble hit. Until it eventually sank into the ocean, far away from the shore. But still in Clawstrike's view. Barely. Clawstrike shook her head and soon stood up. She hissed when sudden pain lashed through her. She looked down to see that one of her claws was stuck in a small crack.

"Great." She murmured to herself before yanking the claw out - which by the way hurt a *lot* - and was sent flying into the water.

Crashing into the waves, the fish swam away from the sudden splash and the light dappled through the ocean. Under Clawstrike was a dark abyss that led to where only StarClan knows. Clawstrike shook her head and started to push her way to the surface.

When she broke free and out on the surface, she took in huge gulps of air before doing a kitty paddle to shore. She reached the shore, spat out water, shook her fur to get the rest of the water out, and took in more breaths of air. *Wow.* She thought, breathing heavily. When her breathing got back to normal, she looked down at her claws and grimaced. Her claw looked almost pulled and blood started to poor out. "Well, I guess I better let Boragewisp take a look." She mumbled to herself.

She walked back to camp, limping. When she got tired of that she merely raised her injured paw up so that it couldn't get even more damaged again. When she got back to camp, she noticed that a lot of cats were murmuring to each other, whispering about how the Clans haven't really been doing the greatest. Cats getting sick or badly injured. She shivered, recalling about how the young Vinekit of BubbleClan had caught kittencough. She wasn't fully sure on what that was, but judging the way that the Clans see it as a problem and are very saddened and already grieving for the young kit, Clawstrike guessed that it was a death sentence.

She walked into the medicine den and was greeted by the aroma of herbs and other plants. There were quite a few moss nests for patients but only one Clanmate was in one: Amberbite. The poor ginger and white cat were covered by leaves that were filled with poultices and cobwebs. They were sleeping steadily, but Clawstrike's stomach ached with worry for them. She turned her attention to the medicine cat soon after, however.

A very tired looking pale and white spotted she-cat was busy with the herb stores, mumbling the name of the herbs under her breath. "Boragewisp?" Clawstrike mewed, taking a step forward.

The medicine cat whirled around, and Clawstrike saw tiredness in Boragewisp's unique eyes, one cyan while the other was amber. "What?" Boragewisp snapped, her tail raised high. Clawstrike flinched. Boragewisp calm downed, her fur starting to settle when

she recognized the new warrior. "Oh, it's just you." She said and walked up to her. "What's wrong?" The old she-cat asked.

"It's my claw." Clawstrike explained. "I think I wrenched it or something." Clawstrike lifted the paw up so Boragewisp could take a look. The medicine cat took the younger she-cat's paw and looked at the bleeding claw.

Boragewisp continued to examine it before letting go and walked to her stores to make a poultice. "Wait here, I'll get some cobwebs and healing herbs for that." She said before she had turned around. Clawstrike nodded and sat down obediently.

As the gray warrior looked around, she felt her fur prickle. The den was dark and while it was helpful for patients when they were trying to sleep, it just made Clawstrike feel uneasy. She felt as though she was being watched. As Boragewisp returned with herbs in her mouth to treat her, Clawstrike's blue gaze turned to the only patient in the den.

"I hope that they get better. They taught me so much and was a great mentor..." Clawstrike murmured.

Boragewisp paused for a while before responding and continuing her work. "Yes, it would be a shame to lose a warrior." She said, in almost a monotone voice.

Clawstrike frowned. "What, you wouldn't let them die, would you? They're a great warrior, and while they may have done some questionable things, they don't deserve to die. Not yet." Clawstrike waited for Boragewisp to respond. She didn't for a while.

Boragewisp had stopped working for a long time, not saying anything. Her eyes didn't meet the young warrior, and instead laid on the ground. Eventually she straightened up and looked at Clawstrike with narrowed eyes. "Of course not. I am a healer, not a killer. I am shocked that you think that I would let my own Clanmate die without me even trying." She snapped.

Clawstrike blinked. She didn't like the way that Boragewisp had hesitated before responding. *Was she really thinking of letting*

Amberbite die? She wondered. She shook the thought away. *Don't think that. She would never do that.* "Right, right..." Clawstrike mumbled, looking down at the ground.

When Boragewisp had finished wrapping Clawstrike's paw with a leaf, she stood up and looked back at Clawstrike. "All done." She said. Clawstrike dipped her head and murmured a thanks before walking out at the den.

As Clawstrike gazed around the camp, the thoughts about Amberbite that had troubled her started to vanish. Or at least get pulled away from the center of her mind. Howlpaw and Honeypaw were play-fighting, Fuzzstar and Wolfblotch were discussing things in the leader's den, Riverclaw was sleeping in their den, and Ashmoss and Oatblur were sharing some fresh-kill. Clawstrike smiled.

She was proud of how far her Clan has gotten. Six moons ago, she was just a little kittypet that had just joined the Keepers on their journey to the ocean. To find a new home. Now they found that home. She was no longer Sock, nor was she an apprentice. She was a warrior. A warrior of WetClan. And she had sworn, that she would protect this Clan and the warrior code with her life. And she won't let anything happen to them. Not on her watch.